

Historical Survey on the International Bilateral Dialogues of the Orthodox Church

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Before presenting the international bilateral dialogues of the Orthodox Church the first section of this paper will present the identity of the Orthodox Church and her vision of unity in the confession of faith and ecclesial communion which determines her relation to other churches and confessions as well as to other religions. The second section of this paper will then present a historical survey on these international bilateral dialogues of the Orthodox Church which were promoted, developed and organized since the Pan-Orthodox Conferences (1961, 1963, 1964, 1968), under the initiative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, without underestimating also the importance of regional initiatives as well as multilateral dialogues. The primary sources of this survey and study are the joint approved texts and agreements¹, by highlighting key theological

¹ For introductory material and list of participants, when available and collection of texts in English see volumes: Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer, eds, *Growth in Agreement: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level*, Ecumenical Documents II, Faith and Order Paper no. 108, New York/Ramsey, Paulist, and WCC, 1984; Jeffrey Gros, FSC, Harding Meyer and William G. Rusch, eds, *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level 1982-1998*, Faith and Order Paper no. 187, WCC Publications and Grand Rapids MI, Eerdmans, 2000. Jeffrey Gros FSC, Thomas F. Best and Lorelei F. Fuchs SA, eds, *Growth in Agreement III: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements 1998-2005*, Faith and Order Paper no.204, WCC Publications and Grand Rapids MI, Eerdmans, 2007. Analogous collections of agreed texts and common declarations exist in other languages, for example in German: *Dokumente wachsender Übereinstimmung. Sämtliche Berichte und Konsentexte interkonfessioneller Gespräche auf Weltebene*, Bd. 1: 1931-1982, Bd. 2: 1982-1990, Bd. 3: 1990-2001 hg. und eingeleitet von H. Meyer u.a., Paderborn-Frankfurt a.M. 1983 u. 1992; A majority of joint agreements and texts translated into Greek and French have been published in *Episepsis* (a News Bulletin published since 1970 by the Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Chambésy/Geneva). For a list of translations and summary of the bilateral dialogues see: Bremer, Thomas, *Dokumentensammlung / in Verbindung mit Miguel Maria Garijo Guembe herausgegeben und bearbeitet von Thomas Bremer, Johannes Oeldemann und Dagmar Stoltmann*. – Trier : Paulinus, 1999. (Sophia. Quellen östlicher Theologie 32); An important reference tool for texts and bibliography see: Puglisi J.F., S.J. Voicu, eds., *A Bibliography of Interchurch and Interconfessional Theological Dialogues*, Centre Pro Unione, Rome, Italy 1984; *Centre Pro Unione* (A Centre conducted by the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement), Supplements 1(1985) – 21(2006); For an Orthodox comprehensive analysis - historical, pastoral, ecclesiastical, thematic, problematic, ecclesiological-

uniting and dividing elements and passages, when necessary, as a result of the bilateral dialogues between the Orthodox Church and the other Churches. The third section of the paper will present the bilateral inter-religious dialogues of the Orthodox Church: on the one hand with Judaism and on the one hand with Islam. These last two sections will also have their respective concluding remarks.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Orthodox Church

Christian Orthodoxy is the concrete manifestation in the history of humanity and the world. It is God's authentic revelation of the truth concerning the relationship of God, man and the world. While absolute truth of religions is linked to the holy and the divine, for the Christian it is concentrated in the person of Christ. For it was Christ who declared "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6) and who said "for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice" (John 18:37).

The word "Orthodoxy" is a qualitative character of faith. It is related to the truth. All Christians want to be united in the true faith. Orthodoxy demonstrates an authentic position towards the truth of faith as revealed in Holy Scriptures, patristic tradition and the continued spiritual experience of the Church. It is a characteristic of all Churches. It is a common character to all three major expressions of Christianity – the Orthodox Church,

cal framework and perspectives - of the theological dialogues see: Damaskinos Papandreou, Metropolitan of Switzerland, *Theological Dialogues: an Orthodox Perspective*, Publishing House Adelfon Kyriakidi, Thessaloniki 1986, 17-141 (in Greek); For an exchange of information, reflections and orientation concerning the Bilateral Dialogues, a series of Nine Forums on Bilateral Dialogues have been inaugurated and sponsored by the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions which in turn are organized by the Faith and Order secretariat. Significant contributions include: Georges Tsetsis, The Question of Christian Unity in the Bilateral Dialogues of the Orthodox Church, in: Falconer, A.D., ed., *Seventh Forum on Bilateral Dialogues: Emerging Visions of Visible Unity in the Canberra Statement and the Bilateral Dialogues*, John XXIII Centre, Annecy-le-Vieux, France, Faith and Order Papers 179, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1997, 25-34; Genadios Limouris, An Account of the Bilateral International Dialogues of the Orthodox Church: The Joint Commission of the Orthodox-Reformed Theological Dialogue, in: Falconer, A.D., ed., *Eighth Forum on Bilateral Dialogues: The Implications of Regional Bilateral Agreements for the International Dialogues of Christian World Communions*, Faith and Order Papers 190, Geneva, WCC Publications, 2002, 98-10; and Reverend Professor Dr. Viorel Ionita, The Vision of Unity in the Multilateral Dialogues and the Bilateral Dialogues of the Orthodox Churches with other Churches, in *The Ninth Forum on Bilateral Dialogues* held in March 2008 at Breklum, Germany (unpublished) See Breklum statement: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/faith-and-order-commission.html>. This last contribution is indeed a more extensive, comprehensive and excellent synthesis of both the multilateral and bilateral dialogues from an Orthodox perspective; The Conference of European Churches Commission Churches in Dialogue invited theologians who are members of the Orthodox Churches and Churches shaped by the Reformation and reform movements to meet to evaluate past and current bilateral theological dialogues. See Communiqué on Consultation on *Dialogues between Orthodox Churches and other member churches of Conference of European Churches*, Pullach, Germany, 23-25 June 2008: <http://www.cec-kek.org/pdf/CIDStatementConsultationPullach.pdf> Papers are unpublished.

the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformed Churches - since they all desire to describe a specific relationship with the true faith.

The criterion of this specific relationship with the truth of faith is always considered as the continuity of experiencing that faith. Vincent of Lérins in the 5th century was the author of the "Commonitorium". He provided a rule in the determination of the true catholic faith. The final ground of Christian truth was Holy Scripture and that the authority of the Church was to be invoked only to guarantee its right interpretation. He did not however preclude a development in matters of doctrine, maintaining that in the process of history the truth of Scripture often became more full explicated. He said, "Quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est" – true faith is what has been believed everywhere, always, and by all - this is the Orthodox faith. The criterion is this continuity or discontinuity in experiencing the apostolic faith which thus created the division of the Christian body. There was deviation from this continuity. The Orthodox Church insists on the criterion of the continuity of the experience of the faith which is manifested in the Patristic tradition.

Tradition is not only an accumulation of writings of illuminated persons in the life of the Church but also the expression in time and place of the living experience in the "Body of Christ". Therefore, Tradition is the main criterion of continuity. Scripture is manifested through Tradition. The Orthodox Church has the conscience that safeguards through Patristic Tradition this authentic continuity of the apostolic faith.

It is just such a notion of Tradition, in its broad unfolding and development that Saint Athanasius has in mind when he says: "It is the very tradition, teaching and faith of the Catholic Church from the beginning, which the Lord gave, the apostles preached and the Fathers kept upon which the church is founded." The Church is based on this affirmation. Scripture never superseded Tradition, but both remained equal bearers of the divine revelation.

On this basis, the self-understanding of the Orthodox Church can be defined as a realization of the "Body of Christ" throughout the history of salvation, as the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, of which the Nicene Creed speaks herself. Every local Church is living the fullness of the experience of the Body of Christ and she realizes her unity in the oneness of the Church everywhere in the world, since the same Body of Christ is experienced on the local and universal level. This is the basis of the administrative structure of the Orthodox Church and of the sacramental experience of the Orthodox Church which are interrelated.

Therefore, the Orthodox Church is a universal communion of autocephalous and autonomous local Churches which are in communion with each other in the unity of faith in love in Christ. We can speak of one Orthodox Church or a communion of sixteen autocephalous and autonomous local Orthodox Churches, according to the canonical order (taxis): Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Russia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Cyprus, Greece, Poland, Albania, Czech and Slovakia, Finland and

Estonia. They form a conciliar and synodal community. It is a communion in the faith and love which expresses the Orthodox identity.

The Orthodox Church does not recognize one supreme head such as the Pope in the Roman Catholic Church. Primacy of honour in the communion of local Churches belongs through a long tradition from the 4th century and on to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. It is the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople who is the first Patriarch in the orthodox communion. It does not have any juridical power over the local Churches. But this primacy of honour is a priority of diakonia and co-ordination and not a primacy of authority. The Ecumenical Patriarch is the first among those who equally participate in the same authority of the Church “*primus inter parus*” - first among equals. This is what the Orthodox Church recognizes first among equals. The highest authority of a local Orthodox Church is the Holy Synod, the gathering of the hierarchy which is the basis of synodality and conciliarity. The ultimate source of all authority in the Church is the will of God as expressed by the will of the hierarchy collectively in a synod. The supreme authority of the collective government of the Church is the Ecumenical (Council).

The Orthodox Church is a traditional Church from experience, but being traditional means that she is open to dialogue. She does not have a mission to create a new Church but to affirm the continuity of the Church in the history of salvation. In this framework, the Orthodox Church is open to dialogue and she leads dialogues with other Churches and Confessions on a bilateral as well as a multilateral level.

B. Unity in the Confession of Faith and Ecclesial Communion

Re-establishing the unity of Christians is the vision of the ecumenical movement. The Orthodox Church is committed to this vision and therefore to bilateral and multilateral theological dialogues. The division of Christianity is a tragedy which deprives the faithful from full communion in partaking of the Eucharist. It is before the chalice that we experience the pain consequences of the division which call us to the imperative need to re-establish unity. Restoration of full communion between Christian Churches presupposes the removal of the causes which provoked interruption of full communion. For this reason, the ecumenical movement gives particular importance to research for theological agreement in order to accelerate sacramental communion.

The restoration of ecclesial communion, in ecclesiological terms, is possible only in terms of unity in the true faith. In fact, all the efforts of the bilateral and multilateral dialogues are inspired by this vision which would finally justify the objectives of the ecumenical movement. However, the lifting of the causes, which caused the interruption of the communion, is a slow process which accentuates the anguish of the Christians living within a pluralist society.

The meeting of the Christian Churches in a common formulation of the dogmatic teaching of Christianity presupposes, on the one hand, the unity in the confession of faith,

and on the other hand, the common interpretation of the faith in the worship and the other manifestations of the spiritual life of the faithful ones. However, the meeting on these two fundamental axes of the Christian life - unity in the confession of faith and common interpretation of the faith – isn't possible than by the convergence of the particular theological traditions of the Christendom divided into making profitable the common elements of these traditions. Such elements are the Scriptures, the Creed, the theological decisions of the ecumenical Councils, the eminent Fathers of the undivided Church, the Divine Liturgy and worship of the undivided Church. They constitute, in a more or less large degree, the substantial contents of the theological traditions of all the Christian Churches.

With regard to the question of the universality of the Revelation and salvation, orthodox theology uses as criterion the biblical assertion according to which God “desires everyone to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth (I Ti 2:4), bequeathed by Christ with His Church. However, the Orthodox Church theoretically does not exclude the possibility of salvation even for the non-Christians, since the all-powerful will of God can have other means of expressing divine kindness and the love for the man. But only God knows these means and the Church cannot exclude them, since Christ, by his incarnation, assumed in His humanity the entire human race.

C. Orthodoxy in Relation to other Churches and Confessions

After a long period of pan-Orthodox conciliar inactivity, four Pan-Orthodox Conferences (Rhodes 1961, Rhodes 1963, Rhodes 1964 and Chambésy 1968), under the initiative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, laid down the process for the preparation of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church which included on its agenda the encouragement of rapprochement and development of theological dialogues between the Orthodox Church and the other Churches of Christendom, in view of cooperation and Christian unity².

The Holy and Great Council, which is being prepared by the Church as a full communion of local Churches, will enable the Church to reinforce its unity in the diaspora, to overcome the polarisation between essence and form, between unity and diversity, and to study again its conception of unity and catholicity in relation to the other Churches and Confessions, in such a way that the fellowship already established with the other Christians can be actualized in view of the not yet fully realized perfect communion.

In view of the preparation of the Holy and Great Council, the efforts are concerned with the urgent necessity of defining the relations of the Orthodox Church to the other Churches and Confessions, a necessity that has often been emphasized by all Orthodox

² An important theological inter-orthodox conference was held in Belgrade in September 1966 concerning the dialogue with Anglicans and the Old-Catholics. See *Istina* 3-4(juillet-décembre 1968) 257-437.

Churches. The Third Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference (Chambésy, November 1986)³ defined its ecclesiological stand concerning the relationship to the whole Christian world, notwithstanding the assessment of the bilateral dialogues with the Anglicans, the Old-Catholic, the Eastern-Orthodox, the Roman Catholic, the Lutherans, and the Reformed. “The aim of dialogues is above all to discover in each confession that which truly belongs to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. But this alone is not sufficient for unity. Each Confession, Christian Church, must identify herself with the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. In practice this means that different Christian confessions must together investigate their basic dogmatic divergences; they must find paths of concord in questions of faith and thus remove the existing dogmatic and ecclesiastical barriers. The Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference was unanimous on the point that concord in questions of faith was imperative and the only way to bring Christendom to the One Undivided Church of the first eight centuries, to the true unity of Churches”⁴.

With respect to the ecclesiastical questions within the framework of the bilateral dialogues, the decision states the following: “The Orthodox Church as the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church is fully conscious of its responsibility with respect to the unity of the Christian world. She recognizes the real existence of all Christian Churches and confessions. At the same time, she is convinced that all her relations with these Churches and confessions must be based upon the clarification, as quickly and objectively as possibly, of ecclesiological questions and particularly, of the common teaching with respect to the Sacraments, grace, priesthood, and apostolic succession. The bilateral theological dialogues currently being conducted by the Orthodox Church are the authoritative expression of this consciousness of Orthodoxy. In conducting dialogue with other Christians, the Orthodox Church is, of course, not unaware of the difficulties attached to such an undertaking; she realizes that they are not to be avoided on the road to the common Tradition of the Early, Undivided Church, and hopes that the Holy Spirit, Which builds the entire Body of the Church, will provide for the deficiencies. In this respect, during these theological dialogues, the Orthodox Church does not depend only on the human strength of those carrying on the dialogue, but also on the guidance of the

³ Proceedings are unpublished. See Report on *Relations of the Orthodox church with the Rest of the Christian World* by Metropolitan Damaskinos (Papandreou) of Switzerland (now Metropolitan of Adrinople), Head of the Secretariat for the Preparation for the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, in *Proceedings of Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission (February 1986)*, in original Greek see: Damaskinos Papandreou, Metropolitan of Switzerland, *Orthodoxy and World*, Editions “Tertios”, Katerini, Greece 1993, 365-383. An Inter-Orthodox Rhodes Symposium on women and the question of ordination was held in 1988 in view of major issues raised in ecumenical discussions, both multilateral and bilateral, and in Orthodoxy in general. See proceedings Ecumenical Patriarchate, Gennadios Limouris, ed., *The Place of the Woman in the Orthodox Church and the Question of the Ordination of Women: Inter-orthodox Symposium, Rhodes, Greece, 30 October – 7 November 1988*, “Tertios” Publications, Katerini, Greece 1992.

⁴ The Decisions of the Third Pre-Council Pan-Orthodox Conference, in *The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* 5 (1987) 57.

Holy Spirit and the grace of the Lord, “who prayed That they all may be one” (Jn. 17. 21). The current bilateral theological dialogues, which were announced by the Pan-Orthodox Conferences, convey the unanimous decision of all Local Orthodox Churches who have the supreme duty of participating actively and continuously in those dialogues, so as not to impede the unanimous witness of Orthodoxy to the glory of the Triune God⁵. It is understood that the goal to be pursued during these theological dialogues will be the same for all: the establishment of unity in true faith and love”⁶. In this respect, all Orthodox Churches follow the recommendations of the Third Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference.

The Orthodox Church is prepared to fully recognize Churches outside our confessional, ecclesial limits, wherever the ecclesiological preconditions exist for such an ecclesiological recognition. The credibility of the common work in the world will be enhanced once it proceeds from the restoration of our full communion. The following notable theological progress of the official dialogues of Orthodoxy with the Anglican Communion, Old Catholics, Oriental Orthodox Churches, Roman Catholic Church, Lutheran World Federation, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, confirms the

⁵ The Decisions of the Third Pre-Council Pan-Orthodox Conference: The Relation of the Orthodox Church to the Rest of the Christian World, in *The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* 6 (1987) 46, §2-4. The Decision continues as follows §4-6: “If some one Church decides against sending representatives-whether to one of the dialogues or to one of its sessions, and that decision is not made at the pan-Orthodox level, then the dialogue continues. The absence of the representative of some Church must be the subject of discussion within the Orthodox Commission on dialogue before the opening of the Dialogue or session in question; the purpose of this is to express the unity and solidarity of the Orthodox Church. Problems arising during the theological discussions by mixed theological discussions will not always in themselves be adequate grounds for the unilateral recall of delegates or for the definitive discontinuance of one Local Orthodox Church’s participation. As a rule, withdrawing of any Church from a dialogue is to be avoided and every effort made on the inter-Orthodox level to re-establish complete representation within the Orthodox Theological Commission. The methodology to be followed as theological dialogues unfold will be directed at finding a solution to theological differences, inherited from the past or those which may have arisen more recently, and at rediscovering the common foundations of the Christian faith. It presupposes the appropriate dissemination of information within Church Plenitude as the dialogue progresses. In the event that a particular theological difference proves insurmountable, the dialogue will continue. Meanwhile, the state disagreement on the particular theological issue will be registered and all the Local Orthodox Churches will be informed of it with a view to future actions” Ibid. 46-47.

⁶ Ibid., 47, §7. The Decision continues as follows §7-10: “Nevertheless, existing theological and ecclesiological difficulties make it possible to establish certain graduations in the character of difficulties likely to be encountered in pursuit of the fixed, common pan-Orthodox goal. The specifics of the problems dealt with in each bilateral dialogue presuppose that they will be conducted using different methodologies. The goals of those dialogues, however, will not be different, for all the dialogues will have the same goal. However, where necessary, efforts will be made to coordinate the work of the various Inter-Orthodox Theological Commissions, especially since the indivisible, ontological unity of the Orthodox Church should be revealed and expressed in dialogues. The end of each official theological dialogue coincides with the completion of the work of the corresponding Mixed Theological Commission when the Chairman of the Inter-Orthodox Commission submits a report to the Ecumenical Patriarch, who, on agreement with the Primates of the Local Orthodox Churches, signals the end of the dialogue. No dialogue can be considered closed unless its completion has been announced as a pan-Orthodox decision. In the event of the successful completion of any theological dialogue, the decision to re-establish Church communion can only be based on the consent of all the Local Orthodox Churches”.

dynamism of the patristic tradition renewed in favour of the rapprochement between the East and the West.⁷

II. BILATERAL INTER-CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUES

A. Dialogue with the Anglican Communion⁸

The Dialogue with the Anglicans, initially known as the Anglican-Orthodox Joint Doctrinal Discussions, began its work of exploring and reconciling doctrinal differences between the Anglican and Orthodox Churches in 1973 in Oxford, England, following preparatory sub-commissions on each side and joint sub-commissions. Agreements reached in its first two stages were set out in the Moscow Agreed Statement of 1976⁹ and the Dublin Agreed Statement of 1984¹⁰. An ‘Epilogue’ summarized the agreements and disagreements as well as points for further study¹¹.

The produced text in the Moscow Agreed Statement included the following subjects: 1) The Knowledge of God; 2) The Inspiration and Authority of Holy Scripture; 3) Scripture and Tradition; 4) The Authority of the Councils; 5) The Filioque Clause; 6) The Church as the Eucharistic Community; and 7) The Invocation of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist.

The Dublin Agreed Statement includes the following subject matter: I. The Mystery of the Church: 1) Approaches to the mystery; 2) The marks of the Church; 3) Communion and intercommunion; 4) Wider leadership within the Church; 5) Witness, evangelism and service. II. Faith in the Trinity, prayer and holiness: 1) Participation in the grace of the Holy Trinity; 2) Prayer; 3) Holiness; 4) The filioque. III Worship and Tradition: 1) Paradosis-Tradition; 2) Worship and the maintenance of the faith; 3) The communion of saints and the departed; 4) Icons. Areas of disagreement are on the marks of the Church that are set down in the creed, the ordination of women, the meaning of Eucharistic communion and others.

The Third Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference praised the satisfactory work of the International Commission for Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogues “despite the tendencies displayed by the Anglicans to underestimate the dialogue”. At the same time, the Conference “noted that the agreement signed in Moscow in 1976 on the exclusion of Filioque from the Creed has not yet met with wide response. Similarly, despite the

⁷ Other preparatory meetings, conversations or “pre-conversations” have also been held with the World Methodist Council, Baptist World Alliance and Adventist Churches.

⁸ See site: <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/ecumenical/dialogues/orthodox/index.cfm>.

⁹ *Ecumenical Documents II...* 41-49.

¹⁰ *Growth in Agreement II...*, 81-104.

¹¹ “In view of the difficulties caused by the ordination of women to the presbyterate by some provinces of the Anglican Communion, the Commission has since published a Statement on the question, the “Athens Statement” (Athens, July 1978)”, *Ibid.*, 40. Furthermore the Llandaff Statement 1980, The Communion of Saints and the Dead was published. *Ibid.*, 57-59.

discussions conducted in Athens (1978) and elsewhere, and the declarations made by the Orthodox against the ordination of women, some Anglican Churches continue the practice. These tendencies can only have a negative impact on the progress of the dialogue. A serious impediment to the normal conduct of this dialogue is also represented by the flexible and unclear ecclesiological presuppositions of the Anglicans which make even the content of some of the jointly-accepted theological texts relative in character. Similar problems arise from some extreme declarations on questions of faith made by Anglican leaders”¹².

Following the reconstruction of the Commission, now known as the International Commission of the Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue, the third phase of the Dialogue began in 1989. The Commission in 1998 produced Interim Agreed Statements on “The Trinity and the Church”, “Christ, the Spirit and the Church” and “Christ, Humanity and the Church, Parts I and II”. They would form part of the final interim agreed statement to be published at the end of this phase of the dialogue¹³.

In 2001 in Volos, the Commission began its examination of ordained ministry in the Church, and its relationship to the unique high priesthood of Christ and the royal priesthood of the whole Christian community. It approved an interim agreed statement on “Episcopate, Episcopos and Primacy”. In June 2002 in Abergavenny, Wales, the Commission approved another interim agreed statement on “Priesthood, Christ and the Church.” The question of who may be ordained to the presbyterate and episcopate was discussed with particular attention on the issues surrounding the ordination of women to the priesthood. The discussion of non-ordained ministry was also introduced¹⁴. Discussions on these issues continued in February 2003 in Addis Addaba, Ethiopia. The nature and understanding of diaconal ministry in the churches was also extensively discussed. It was stated in the Communiqué that “by continuing to persevere in its study of these aspects of ministry, the Commission expects to be able to express a strong and creative consensus on ministry in the context of its ecclesiological study”. A first draft of an Agreed Statement was submitted to the Commission, in 2004 in Canterbury, United Kingdom. However, consideration of the topic on the ordination to the diaconate, presbyterate and episcopate was postponed until the following meeting so that further work could be completed on the presentation of Orthodox understandings of these matters¹⁵. In addition, discussions were held on “Heresy, Schism and Reception”.

¹² *The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* 6(1987) 47.

¹³ See 12-15 February 2001 Communiqué, Volos, Greece, International Commission of the Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue: <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/ecumenical/dialogues/orthodox/docs/2001communiqué.cfm>.

¹⁴ See February 2003 Communiqué, Addis Addaba, Ethiopia, International Commission of the Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue: <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/ecumenical/dialogues/orthodox/docs/2003communiqué.cfm>.

¹⁵ See June 2004 Communiqué, Canterbury, United Kingdom, International Commission of the Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue: <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/ecumenical/dialogues/orthodox/docs/2004communiqué.cfm>.

It was stated already in 2004 that the Commission's "goal is to bring together all the Interim Agreements since 1989 in a Report for publication in 2006 which is entitled "The Church of the Triune God", known as The Cyprus Agreed Statement. The question of the ordination of women remains unresolved in this document. However, the document presents a considerable agreement over a range of issues. In 2005 in Kykkos Monastery, Cyprus¹⁶, the Commission completed the work on these Agreed Statements, and met in 2006 to finalize the text of the complete cycle of Statements agreed in the third phase from 1989 to date in preparation for publication¹⁷.

The International Commission for Anglican–Orthodox Theological Dialogue has released "The Church of the Triune God", in May 2007¹⁸. Sections of the book are titled The Trinity and the Church; Christ, the Spirit and the Church; Christ, Humanity and the Church; Episcopate, Episcopos and Primacy, Priesthood, Christ and the Church; Women and Men, Ministries and the Church; Heresy, Schism and the Church; and Reception in Communion.

B. Dialogue with the Old Catholics¹⁹

In July 1973 the Joint Orthodox-Old Catholic Commission met in Penteli to dialogue with respect to the purpose, methods and planning. The dialogue with the Old Catholics, specifically with the International Old Catholic Bishops' Conference²⁰, began officially in 1975 with the perspective that there were no essential differences with the Orthodox Church on the doctrine of God and of Christ. Nevertheless, a study and dialogue on ecclesiological doctrine was essential due to the stance of the Old Catholics who accept the branch theory and have sacramental communions with the Anglican Church and several churches of the Reformed tradition²¹.

It was decided that the following methodological steps take place: "firstly, preliminary drafts were to be elaborated – independently, though after consultation – by Orthodox and

¹⁶ Communiqué: <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/ecumenical/dialogues/orthodox/docs/2005communiqued.cfm>

¹⁷<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/ecumenical/dialogues/orthodox/docs/pdf/The%20Church%20of%20the%20Triune%20God.pdf>.

¹⁸ See Agreed Anglican-Orthodox statement released: http://www.episcopalchurch.org/79901_86292_ENG_HTM.htm.

¹⁹The collection of texts of the agreed Statements in the original German, French, English are published in *Koinonia Auf Altkirchlicher Basis: Deutsche Gesamtausgabe der gemeinsamen Texte des orthodox-alkatholischen Dialogs 1975-1987 mit französischer und englischer Übersetzung*, ed. Von Urs von Arx., 79. Jarh: Oktober-Dezember 1989 - 4 Heft. For a comprehensive historical and theological analysis of the dialogue see: Gregorios M. Lianta, *The Bilateral Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox and Old Catholics*, Editions Ziti, Thessaloniki, Greece 2000 (in Greek).

²⁰ The foundation of The International Old Catholic Bishops' Conference was in 1889 which solidified the internal communion of the Old Catholic Fellowship: See Historical Introduction in *Growth in Agreement, Ecumenical Documents II...*, 390.

²¹ For a further analysis on ecclesiological agreement see: Tsetsis, George, *The Question of Christian Unity...*, 28-29.

Old Catholic theological experts; secondly, common drafts were to be worked out by both commissions or by a jointly appointed sub-commission; finally, the divergences which would appear were to be dealt with in the plenary sessions of the Theological Commission in order to work out common texts which then would be presented to the respective church authorities...the overall result is to be officially submitted to the leading representatives of both church communions for announcement of the completion of the dialogue and for decision concerning further proceedings in view of establishing full communion”²².

An agreement statement was reached on six theological subjects in a very short period of time which was completed in 1987. These texts represent the doctrine and teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches. The topics and subtopics are as follows: Doctrine of God (Chambésy, 1975) I./1 Divine Revelation and its transmission I/2 The Canon of holy Scripture I/3 The Holy Trinity; Christology (Chambésy, 1975, 1977) II/1 The Incarnation of the Word of God II/2 The Hypostatic Union II/3 The Mother of God; Ecclesiology (Chambésy 1977, Bonn 1979, Zagorsk 1981, Chambésy 1983) III/1 The Nature and Marks of the Church III/2 The Unity of the Church and the Local Churches III/3 The Boundaries of the Church III/4 the Head of the Church; Soteriology (Chambésy 1983) IV/1 Christ’s Work of Salvation IV/2 The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Church and the Appropriation of Salvation; Sacramental Teaching (Amersfoort 1985, Kavala 1987) V/1 The Sacraments or Mysteries of the Church V/2 Baptism V/3 Confirmation V/4 Holy Eucharist V/5 Unction V/6 Ordination V/7 Marriage Eschatology (Kavala 1987) VI/1 The Doctrine of the Last Things VI/2 Church Community.

In 1986 the Third Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference expressed “satisfaction with the progress of the theological dialogue...[and believed] that a fuller evaluation of this dialogue must take into account: a) the persistence of the former practice of the Old Catholic Church of communion in Sacraments with the Anglican Church, and a recent tendency to the same practice vis-à-vis the Evangelical Church in West Germany, since this diminishes the importance of the ecclesiological texts signed together as a result of the dialogue; b) the difficulties encountered by the Old Catholic Church in incorporating and applying the jointly signed theological texts. Both these questions should be examined by the competent authorities of the Orthodox Church with respect to their ecclesiological and ecclesiastical presuppositions for re-establishing communion with the Old Catholics may be determined as quickly as possible”. The expectations of this dialogue were very promising with the Old Catholics and therefore they reaffirmed in saying that “The successful completion of this theological dialogue will have a favourable effect on the other dialogues reinforcing their credibility”²³.

²² *Ecumenical Documents II...*, 391.

²³ The *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* 6(1987) 47-48.

In the process of reporting the achievements of this dialogue to the local Orthodox Churches, the Old Catholic Churches entered into inter-communion with other Christian Churches and instituted the ordination of women, issues which were raised in 1986. These issues remain obstacles for Christian unity and even dialogue with the Old Catholics. However, a small joint sub-commission has been constituted recently in order to address these outstanding issues, especially on the question of the ordination of women.

C. Dialogue with the Oriental Orthodox Churches²⁴

The theological dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, or the pre-Chalcedonian Churches (Coptic, Ethiopian, Syrian, Armenian, and Malankara), has rapidly progressed, on the one hand, due to the increased sensitivity of the orthodox ecclesial conscience confronted with the separation of the these Churches from the unity of the Orthodox church, and on the other hand, thanks to the important work which preceded that of the Joint Theological Commission, that is that of the four theological conferences of Aarhus (1964), Bristol (1967), Geneva (1970), and Addis Ababa (1971). The reports and conclusions of these consultations were discussed during the first plenary meeting of the Joint Theological Commission and considered as being valuable for its work.

The first official meeting of the Joint Theological Commission took place in Chambésy, at the Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, in December 1985. This meeting focused on the list of themes to be discussed as well as the method to be adopted for the work of the Commission. As for the themes, the emphasis was put on Christology (“Towards a common Christology”), in accordance with the decision of the Third Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference²⁵.

The prospects of this dialogue are such, that they may reasonably hope that solutions may be found by an agreement on remaining open issues connected with the “horos” definition of the IVth Ecumenical Council in complete conformity with the christological decision of the other Ecumenical Councils, the manner of acceptance of the IVth, Vth, VIth and VIIth Ecumenical Councils, the lifting of mutually pronounced anathemas, etc. This dialogue would undoubtedly be strengthened by a parallel study and comparison of current common pastoral problems, bearing in mind that both families of Churches live in

²⁴ Historical survey is based on reflections and perspectives by Metropolitan Damaskinos (Papandreou) of Switzerland, *Le Dialogue théologique de l'Église orthodoxe et des Églises orientales orthodoxes. Réflexions et perspectives*, in *Episkepsis* 516 (31.3.1995) 10-22; For a Historical and Dogmatic Study, see Andrea N. Papavasileiou, *The Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox and the Pre-Chalcedonians*, Volume 1, Centre for Studies at the Monastery of Kykkou, Lefkosia 2000; Other collection of texts in English and other contributions on the dialogue see: *Towards Unity: The Theological dialogue between the Orthodox church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches*, edited by Christine Chaillot and Alexander Belopopsky, Inter-Orthodox Dialogue, Geneva 1999. See also site <http://www.orthodoxunity.org/statements.html>.

²⁵ *Growth in Agreement II*...190.

a common environment and have a common ecclesiastical presupposition which may contribute to solving these problems.

For the next Meeting, whose aim was to re-discover the common grounds in Christology and Ecclesiology, the following main theme and subsequent sub-themes were agreed upon: "Towards a common Christology": a) Problems of terminology; b) Conciliar formulations; c) Historical factors; and d) Interpretation of Christological dogmas today²⁶.

The second meeting of the Joint Theological Commission took place at the Monastery of Anba Bishoy in Egypt in June 1989 on the basis of a project prepared by the Sub-Committee of Corinth (1987). The common theological text was called the "First Agreed Statement"²⁷, and it proposed the orthodox teaching on the hypostatic union of the two perfect natures in Christ, that is the uncreated divine nature and the created human nature together with their specific natural characteristics and their respective functions.

The "Agreement" particularly referred to the dogmatic definition ("horos") of the IVth Ecumenical Council (451) with the following paragraph: "We agree in condemning the Nestorian and the Eutychian heresies. We neither separate nor divide the human nature in Christ from His divine nature, nor do we think that the former was absorbed in the latter and thus ceased to exist. The four adverbs used to qualify the mystery of the Hypostatic union belong to our common tradition - without commingling (or confusion) (*asyngchytos*), without change (*atreptos*), without separation (*achoristos*) and without division (*adiairetos*)"²⁸.

In the same spirit the agreement refers to the teaching on the hypostatic union of the two natures contained in the teaching of the Vth Ecumenical Council (553) and to its christological terminology: "When we speak of the one composite (*sunthetos*) hypostasis of our Lord Jesus Christ, we do not say that in Him a divine hypostasis and a human hypostasis came together. It is that the one eternal hypostasis of the Second Person of the Trinity has assumed our created human nature in that act uniting it with his own uncreated divine nature, to form an inseparably and unconfusedly united real divine-human being, the natures being distinguished from each other in contemplation (*theoria*) only"²⁹.

Similarly there was also a reference to the definition of the VIth Ecumenical Council (680) on the hypostatic union of the two natural wills and two energies of the incarnate Logos: "This is the mystery of the hypostatic union we confess in humble adoration - the real union of the divine with the human, with all the properties and function of the uncreated divine nature, including all the properties and functions of the uncreated divine nature, including natural will and natural energy, inseparably and unconfusedly united

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 191-193.

²⁸ Ibid., 193.

²⁹ Ibid., 192.

with the created human with all its properties and functions, including natural will and natural energy. It is the Logos Incarnate who is the subject of all the willing and acting of Jesus Christ³⁰. The mutual agreement “is not limited to Christology, but encompasses the whole faith of the undivided church of the early centuries”³¹.

Finally, the Joint Theological Commission decided to create a “joint sub-committee for the Pastoral Problems” which was to work in the spirit of the proposals made by the Third Pre-Conciliar Pan-orthodox Conference to collaborate on the practical issues. In fact, the Sub-Committee had a special meeting at the Monastery of Anba Bishoy in February 1990 and drafted a long report containing concrete proposals for the co-operation of the two churches concerning the inter-ecclesial relations and the service of contemporary mankind. The report was submitted to the third meeting of the Joint Theological Commission and was attached to the common theological document.

The third meeting of the Joint Theological Commission met Chambésy in September 1990 which was prepared by the Sub-Committee. It concentrated on the detailed reports concerning the terminology of the Council of Chalcedon, in order to elucidate the dogmatic decision of the other ecumenical councils and the anathemas pronounced against each other. The proposal of the Sub-Committee - obtained after a long theological debate - was discussed at the plenary of the Joint Theological Commission, which succeeded in formulating and accepting a common theological text known as the “Second Agreed Statement and Recommendations to the Churches”³². This document renewed the “First Agreed Statement” on the fundamental points of the christological dogma (§1-7), recognized the orthodoxy (in the orthodox sense of the word) of the definitions of the four ecumenical councils convoked after the IIIrd Council (§8), decided that the reciprocal lifting of the anathemas was necessary and possible with the condition that they had not been pronounced for heresy (§10) etc. With respect to the formal proclamation of ecumenicity of the IVth, Vth, VIth and VIIth ecumenical councils, the orthodoxy of their definitions was unanimously recognized, but the oriental orthodox side formulated persistent reservations on the instant demand expressed by the orthodox delegates in the sub-commission as well as in the plenary, because on the one hand the councils were connected to anathemas and condemnations of the customs of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, and on the other hand because this question was judged as going beyond the mandate that their Churches had entrusted them³³.

The Fourth meeting of the Joint Theological Commission, in Chambésy in November 1993, took place on an express request of the Churches for a theological response to be given to the concrete questions posed. There were preparatory meetings of the presidents and the secretaries of the joint Theological Commission, one at Cairo in April 1993, and

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 193.

³² Ibid., 194-199.

³³ Metropolitan Damaskinos, *Le Dialogue théologique...* in *Episkepsis* 516 (31.3.1995) 12.

the other at Chambésy in June 1993 and, at the same time, specialized theologians were asked to report on the various questions for example, a) the competent ecclesiastical authority from each side for the lifting of the anathemas and what are the presuppositions for the restoration of ecclesiastical communion?; b) which anathemas of which synods and persons could be lifted in accordance with the proposal of paragraph 10 of the Second Agreed Statement?; c) Which is the canonical procedure for each side for the lifting of the anathemas and the restoration of ecclesial communion? d) How could we understand and implement the restoration of ecclesiastical communion in the life of our churches? and e) Which are the canonical and liturgical consequences of full communion?³⁴.

The work of the Joint Theological Commission began with separate sessions, and the proposals of both sides were drafted separately. The reading of the reports raised long discussions because of misunderstandings about their conformity with the two Agreed Statements. After the necessary clarification, a committee was asked to draft a common text named "Proposals for the lifting of anathemas", which was unanimously accepted.

As for the canonical and liturgical consequences of the re-establishment of ecclesial communion, the Joint Theological Commission thought it proper to leave it to the local corresponding authorities of the local Churches on the basis of "the common canonical and synodical principles" and to entrust the liturgical issues to a liturgical sub-committee which would propose formulas for adequate concelebration³⁵.

In the meantime, in accordance with these decisions, the two presidents have visited the Primate of the Churches of Orthodox Churches and the Oriental Orthodox Churches. The general considerations from these visits and discussions can be summarized in the following way³⁶:

a) All the Churches, Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox, enthusiastically received not only the positive results of the Theological Dialogue, but also the perspective of the restoration of ecclesial communion after a separation of 15 centuries, declared the full agreement on the christological dogma as a historical event and expressed their hope that the ecclesial communion will be re-established, with no longer delay.

b) All the Churches approved the proposals of the Communiqué of the Joint Theological Commission concerning the way to handle the canonical and liturgical consequences; moreover they considered the local liturgical differences as being minor and admissible and that they may be examined by a special subcommittee which would find an appropriate solution in due course of time.

c) Certain Churches underlined the importance of preparing the ecclesial conscience, but also insisted on the need to write up proper handbooks to explain the common faith in

³⁴ *Growth in Agreement III*...4-5.

³⁵ *Growth in Agreement III*...5-6.

³⁶ Metropolitan Damaskinos, *Le Dialogue théologique...*, in *Episkepsis* 516 (31.3.1995) 13-15.

popularized form so that the people may be informed in time and that misunderstandings and misleading interpretations concerning the perspective of the re-establishment of ecclesial communion be avoided.

d) The issue of the formal proclamation by the Oriental Orthodox Churches of the ecumenicity of the IVth, Vth, VIth and VIIth Ecumenical Councils was debated at great length with all the local Orthodox Churches. In view of the two "Agreed Statements" (1989, 1990) and the complete agreement on the theology of the definition of these Councils, as systematically analyzed in the relevant paragraphs of the two Statements as well as in the reservations formulated by the delegates of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, the formal proclamation of their ecumenicity could be considered as the natural consequence of the restoration of the full communion or be evaluated in the future.

e) The criticism expressed by certain religious circles, principally in Greece, with respect to certain paragraphs (8, 10) of the "Second Agreed Statement" rests on unilateral and arbitrary choices, which raise problems on issues fully covered by the theology of the two "Common Statements", for example the question whether the Oriental Orthodox Churches accept the Chalcedon definition of the "two natures" after the union, or reject monophysism or monothelism, or accept the faith of the Seven Ecumenical Councils etc. The responses of the two Statements are very clear on these points.

f) Several theological reservations with respect to the non condemnation of the heresy of Dioscorus, Severus etc. by the VIth and VIIth Ecumenical Councils were averted by detailed reports and by a long debate in the Inter-orthodox Commission, and the proposals of the Joint Theological Commission on the lifting of the anathemas pronounced against them were drafted on the basis of the Greek and foreign bibliography. There is no solid theological basis for questioning the proposal for the lifting of the anathemas.

g) The problem of the lifting of anathemas imposed by an ecumenical Council was discussed at length by the Inter-Orthodox Commission on the basis of the historical-canonical report on this subject; the thesis was unanimously adopted that the Church can lift the anathemas of an Ecumenical Council on condition that the person was not condemned as a heretic. The ecclesiological basis of the relationship between Church and Ecumenical Council ensures both the continuity of the conciliar conscience of the Church, and the indisputable authority of its canonical institutions in each period of time whenever their decisions serve the unity of the Church in the true faith and its soteriological mission in the world.

A Meeting was held at the Coptic Monastery Anba Bishoy of the two co-presidents of the Joint Theological Commission of Dialogue in December 1994 at which recalled namely the proposals concerning the need to inform in a responsible way the people of God on the

theological agreement and the perspectives for the re-establishment of ecclesial communion, particularly as to its canonical, liturgical and pastoral consequences³⁷.

The Conclusions of the meeting were summarized by the co-presidents: “a) to see to it that texts be drafted in time for promoting the common comprehension for the consensus of the faith and discouraging all tendencies to misinformation, without this preventing the local Churches from preparing their faithful in having resorted specially to the mass media or to edited texts under their responsibility; b) To see to coordinating the Sub-committee on liturgical matters in order to study much faster and evaluate the liturgical consequences - and the common liturgical formula for the case of con-celebrations - of the re-establishment of ecclesial communion; c) To see to it that the Sub-committee for pastoral matters pursue still more actively its work, which is particularly important”³⁸.

A Meeting of the Liturgical and Pastoral Sub-committees were held at the Monastery of Penteli, Athens in March 1995 during which concrete proposals were made³⁹. The following meeting of the two Sub-committees was held in Damascus-Syria in February 1998 during which it was agreed to “to prepare and publish books and booklets, each side for her own people, for theologians and for common faithful and in different languages, to explain, clarify and popularize the theological agreements stressing the authenticity of the Tradition of the churches of the other side; to use all available mass-media in order to inform about and explain the theological agreements; to reaffirm that the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox churches basically maintain the old liturgical traditions in their local liturgical types, which co-existed in the undivided Church; to declare that the liturgical issues on differences have to be theological clarified whether they are in agreement with our common Christological statements; and to set up a small joint working group of experts to prepared joint studies and publications for liturgical issues”⁴⁰.

The progress to date and the future prospects of the Dialogues of the theological dialogue was presented at the Inter-Orthodox Theological Committee for Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches which was convened at the Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in March 2005. The in-depth

³⁷ Ibid., 17-18.

³⁸ Ibid., 19.

³⁹ On the occasion of a publication of an article published in *Episkepsis* 516 (31.3.1995) 10-22 on the Dialogue with the Oriental Orthodox Churches by Metropolitan Damaskinos of Switzerland, co-president of the Joint Theological Commission, the Monastic community of Mount Athos formulated certain evaluations concerning the contents of the two Agreed Statements (1989, 1990) in a form of a Memo on 14/27-5-1995, No. Protocole Φ2/11β/455, which was published in *Synaxis* 57 (January-March 1996) 63-67 (in Greek). Metropolitan Damaskinos then in turn responded to this Memo: Réponse du métropolite Damaskinos de Suisse, co-président du dialogue avec les Églises orientales orthodoxes, à une lettre de la Communauté monastique du mont Athos concernant ce dialogue, in *Episkepsis* 521 (31.8.1995) 9-19. Following this exchange of responses, the Holy Community of Mount Athos judged it necessary to return to the subject by publishing, *Observations on the Theological Dialogue between Orthodox and Anti-Chalcedonians: Response to the critique of Metropolitan Damaskinos of Switzerland*, Mount Athos 1996 (in Greek); for a summary see *Synaxis* 58 (April-June 1996) 61-66.

⁴⁰ Metropolitan Damaskinos, Le Dialogue théologique...in *Episkepsis* 516 (31.3.1995) 22.

presentations and discussions which expressed many theological, ecclesiological and methodological arguments in the following proposals are summarized in the Communiqué⁴¹: 1) Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Pre-Chalcedonian Oriental Orthodox Churches is particularly important, as it was proclaimed by the relevant unanimous decision of the Third Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference (1986), and must therefore be continued to complete the work of both the Joint Theological Commission and the Sub-Committees on the pastoral and liturgical issues; 2) The Joint Theological Commission has to plan its work, on the one hand in reference to the reservations or criticism expressed, either justified or unjustified, on the ambiguous points in the two Agreed Theological Statements (1989, 1990) and to the consequences deriving from them, and on the other hand in reference to the still pending issues of the two Sub-Committees because only in this way will it be possible not only to demonstrate the significance of the agreement reached on the Christological issue, but to plan and prepare as required for the ecclesiastical body; 3) The ecclesiological importance of recognizing and including the doctrinal definitions of the IV, V, VI and VII Ecumenical Synods must be promoted more fully through special studies on their Cyrillian basis, and the Anathemas must be lifted in order to restore ecclesiastical communion; these measures presuppose thorough and integrated research of the theological heritage of both theological traditions and the clarification of the Christological terminology; and 4) The planning of the future activities presupposes the immediate assembly, organization, and publication in an attractive special volume of all the presentations and studies, which refer to the disputed theological issues of the Agreed Theological Statements, or to the refutation of the criticism against them, because in this way appropriate arguments will support not only the work that has already been accomplished, but also the future prospects of the work of the Joint Theological Commission and the two Sub-Committees.

D. Dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church⁴²

With the presence of Orthodox observers at the Second Vatican Council, the encouragement of the Third Pan-Orthodox Conference (Rhodes 1964), the official ecclesial contacts between The Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople and Pope Paul VI⁴³ and “dialogue of love”, the Orthodox Church began an official dialogue in 1980 with the Roman Catholic Church.

⁴¹ Unpublished.

⁴² For a comprehensive presentation of the official texts of the dialogue including dates and participants consult Website of *Centre Pro Unione* for Interconfessional Dialogues Full Text: http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/o-rc/e_o-rc-info.html. and http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/sub-index/indexorthodoxch.htm#Ecumenical%20Patriarchate. See also presentations by George Tsetsis, *Seventh Forum on Bilateral Dialogues...*29-31 and Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima in *Eighth Forum on Bilateral Dialogues...*99-100.

⁴³ The Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople and Pope Paul VI met for the first time in January 1964 in Jerusalem; “erased from the memory” of the church the mutual excommunication of 1054 in

In 1976 a joint commission was established in order to prepare an official dialogue. In 1978 a document was prepared which elaborated a program and methodology which would begin with themes from those which “unite” and then those which “divide” the two Churches, particularly ecclesiological themes. Orthodox and Catholics would then proceed to the more divisive ones. On 30 November 1979 Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I and Pope John Paul II jointly announced officially the beginning of the theological dialogue constituting the new Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church.

It was stated clearly in 1980 on Patmos and Rhodes at the first plenary session that “The purpose of the dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church is the re-establishment of full communion between these two churches. This communion, based on unity of faith according to the common experience and tradition of the early Church, will find its expression in the common celebration of the Holy Eucharist”⁴⁴. This session also unanimously adopted the programmatic document prepared in 1978 as well as selected themes for study. Draft documents would be prepared by a three joint sub-commission and debated every two years at plenary sessions. Furthermore, “The dialogue of love should continually accompany the theological dialogue in order to facilitate resolution of difficulties and to strengthen the deepening of fraternal relations between the two churches both on the local and on more general levels”⁴⁵. With respect to methodology, “the dialogue should begin with the elements which unite the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches. This in no way means that it is desirable, or even possible, to avoid the problems which still divide the two churches. It only means that the dialogue should begin in a positive spirit and that this spirit should prevail when treating the problems which have accumulated during a separation lasting many centuries”. The first theme selected was the study of the sacraments of the Church which “will normally come to an examination of ecclesiological as well as other aspects of the faith, without moving away from the lived character which is fundamental for theology”⁴⁶.

In 1982 the second plenary session was held in Munich. The first agreed text was finalized entitled: “The Mystery of the Church and of the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity”⁴⁷. The discussions focused on: the nature of the Eucharist; the relation between Eucharist and Holy Trinity; the action of the Trinity through the

a common declaration by them on 7 December 1965; and exchanged visits in 1967 in Constantinople and Rome. See E.J. Storman ed., *Towards the Healing of Schism: The Sees of Rome and Constantinople: Public Statements and Correspondence between the Holy See and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, 1958-1984*, New York, Paulist, 1987; See also J. Borelli and J. Erickson, eds., *The Quest for Unity: Orthodox and Catholics in Dialogue*, Crestwood and Washington, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press and the United States Catholic Conference, 1996.

⁴⁴ Ibid., Section I.

⁴⁵ Ibid., II, §5.

⁴⁶ Ibid., III, §1.

⁴⁷ *Growth in Agreement II...* 652-659.

Eucharist as well as through the church and the communion of local churches. Without any reference to the Filioque concerning the relations between Son and the Spirit, the joint statement says: “Without wishing to resolve yet the difficulties which have arisen between the East and the West concerning the relationship between the Son and the Spirit, we can already say together that this Spirit, which proceeds from the Father (Jn 15:26) as the sole source in the Trinity and which has become the Spirit of our sonship (Rom 8:15) since he is also the Spirit of the Son (Gal 4:6), is communicated to us particularly in the Eucharist by this Son upon whom he reposes in time and in eternity (Jn 1:32)”⁴⁸.

In 1984 the third plenary session was held in Crete, Greece. The draft document entitled “Faith, Sacraments, and the Unity of the Church” was long debated without any agreement, for example, on the questions of liturgical administration of the sacraments of initiation, relations between baptism, confirmation or chrismation and Eucharist and to the unity of the Church, etc. Therefore, the Joint Coordinating Committee resolved the problems which in turn were discussed and the document was adopted⁴⁹ at the fourth plenary session, organized in two separate sessions in 1986 and 1987, near Bari, Italy. The document includes the following themes: I. Faith and communion in the sacraments; 1. True faith is a divine gift and free response of the human person; 2. The liturgical expression of the faith; 3. The Holy Spirit and the sacraments; 4. The faith formulated and celebrated in the sacraments: the symbols of faith; 5. Conditions for communion of faith; 6. True faith and communion in the sacraments; 7. The unity of the church in faith and sacraments; II. The sacraments of Christian initiation: their relation to the unity of the church.

The Bari documents lays down the condition “that unity in faith is a presupposition for unity in the sacraments, and especially in the Holy Eucharist which is a divine gift, should be understood as a commitment of the Christian, a commitment of mind, heart, and will.” Furthermore the text says that “In its profound reality it is also an ecclesial event which is realized and accomplished in and through the communion of the Church, in its liturgical and especially in its eucharistic expression”⁵⁰.

The document continues to refer to true faith as a divine gift and free response of the human person: “Given by God, the faith announced by the Church is proclaimed, lived and transmitted in a local, visible church in communion with all the local churches spread over the world, that is, the catholic Church of all times and everywhere. The human person is integrated into the Body of Christ by his or her koinonia (communion) with this visible Church which nourishes this faith by means of the sacramental life and the word of God, and in which the Holy Spirit works in the human person”⁵¹. Thus, unity of faith is

⁴⁸ Ibid., 654, I, §6.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 660-668.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 660, Historical Introduction §2.

⁵¹ Ibid., 662, I, 1, §8.

“inseparable from unity of sacramental life. Communion in faith and communion in the sacraments are not two distinct realities. They are two aspects of a single reality which the Holy Spirit fosters, increases and safeguards among the faithful”⁵².

In the meantime in November 1986, The Third Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference in relation to the Roman Catholic Church⁵³ “welcomes the constructive steps that have been made and confirms both the desire and the resolution of the Orthodox Church to continue this important dialogue, which has led to the joint compilation” of the above mentioned texts.

However, the Conference raised certain problems related to the dialogue with respect to themes, methodology and others “which are making the rapid and effective progress of this dialogue more complicated”. Therefore it made several suggestions to be accepted also by the other party in accordance with the procedure of the dialogue upon which it was jointly established and accepted. As far as themes are concerned, the Conference proposes that, henceforth, themes for the dialogue be chosen not only from among those which “unite,” but also from among those which “divide” the two Churches, particularly ecclesiological themes⁵⁴.

“With respect to methodology, the Conference proposes: a) the presence of separate text-projects – one Orthodox and one Roman Catholic – which can act as a working base for Sub-Commissions in compiling the texts of the former type; b) conducting an Orthodox critique, at the level of the Inter-Orthodox Commission, of the common texts compiled by the Coordination Committee; c) the compiling of two original texts, rather than a single one, one in Greek and the other in French, and the broader use of Biblical and patristic language and terminology in those texts; d) the acceptance of the common texts at each session not by the members of the Mixed Commission, but by the two Commission as parties taking equal part in the dialogue”⁵⁵.

The Conference also underlined the necessity to discuss the outstanding and urgent issues on the “unfavourable results of such phenomena as the Union and proselytism. The existence of Uniatism, in its historical and contemporary manifestation, as well as the existence of proselytism in whatever form, are facts unacceptable to Orthodox which act as negative factors, complicating the further progress of the dialogue”⁵⁶.

In light of this and as a priority in ecclesiology, the Conference proposed “that the realities of Uniatism, as well as proselytism enacted through Uniatism or by other means, should be examined in one of the stages of the dialogue”. Furthermore, it was also proposed that appropriate means be found “for the practical solution of the problems of

⁵² Ibid., 666, I, 6, §36.

⁵³ *The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* 6(1987), 48-49.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 48.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 48-49.

the pastoral, and other consequences of Uniatism and proselytism, which are negative both for Orthodoxy and for its dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church”⁵⁷.

In 1988 the fifth plenary session was held at New Valamo, Finland. The document adopted, linked to the first two documents with strict theological coherence and with no intention to produce a complete and systematic theological study, was entitled “The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church, with Particular Reference to the Importance of the Apostolic Succession for the Sanctification and Unity of the People of God”⁵⁸. Themes include: I. Christ and The Holy Spirit; II. The Priesthood in the Divine Economy of Salvation; III. The Ministry of the Bishop, Presbyter and Deacon; IV. Apostolic Succession. This topic had been chosen in 1984 in Crete at its third plenary session and studied in the interim at the level of the sub-commissions.

In the meantime, the subject “Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Structure of the Church: Conciliarity and Authority in the Church” was studied on the level of the sub-commissions in view of the sixth plenary session in Munich 1990 to be held in Munich. However, in view of the drastic political changes in Eastern Europe and Central Europe and the resurgence of uniatism – “by the origin, the existence and the development of the Catholic Churches of byzantine Rite which are also called ‘Uniate Churches’ – Orthodox-Catholic relations were hampered.

Therefore, the sub-commission proceeded to “Work on the Study of Questions concerning the Churches of Byzantine Rite United with Rome and the Problems of Uniatism and Proselytism” in Vienna in January 1990 and then prepared for the sixth plenary in Moscow in February 1990. In June 1990 in Freising/Munich the Communiqué reflects on the question of uniatism and defines the term “Uniatism”: ‘Uniatism’ indicates here the effort which aims to bring about the unity of the Church by separating from the Orthodox Church communities or Orthodox faithful without taking into account that, according to ecclesiology, the Orthodox Church is a sister-Church which itself offers the means of grace and salvation... we reject “Uniatism” as method for the search for unity because it is opposed to the common tradition of our Churches...Where “Uniatism” has been employed as a method, it failed to achieve its goal of bringing the Churches closer together; rather it provoked new divisions. The situation thus created has been a source of conflict and suffering, and these have deeply marked the memory and the collective consciousness of the two Churches. On the other hand, for ecclesiological reasons, the conviction has grown that other ways must be sought out”⁵⁹.

Therefore, upon the request of the Orthodox, the Joint International Commission decided to examine the burning and urgent question of uniatism and the Eastern Catholic Churches which continued to be studied in depth at the seventh plenary session held in June 1993 at Balamand, Lebanon, however with the absence of delegates of six

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ *Growth in Agreement II...* 671-679.

⁵⁹ http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/o-rc/doc/e_o-rc_06_freising.html.

autocephalous Orthodox Churches. The document issued was entitled “Uniatism, Method of Union of the Past, and the Present Search for Full Communion”⁶⁰ divided into two sections: Ecclesiological Principles and Practical Rules.

The Balamand document formulated two important affirmations: First, “Because of the way in which Catholics and Orthodox once again consider each other in their relationship to the mystery of the Church and discover each other once again as Sister Churches, this form of “missionary apostolate” described above, and which has been called “uniatism,” can no longer be accepted either as a method to be followed nor as a model of the unity our Churches are seeking”⁶¹ opposed to the common Tradition of our Churches; and second, “Concerning the Oriental Catholic Churches, it is clear that they, as part of the Catholic Communion, have the right to exist and to act in answer to the spiritual needs of their faithful”⁶².

With an expression of hope to overcome the existing obstacles the document concludes “By excluding for the future all proselytism and all desire for expansion by Catholics at the expense of the Orthodox Church, the commission hopes that it has overcome the obstacles which impelled certain autocephalous Churches to suspend their participation in the theological dialogue and that the Orthodox Church will be able to find itself altogether again for continuing the theological work already so happily begun”⁶³.

After a series of postponements, due to the high criticism in both Orthodoxy and the Roman Catholic Church and the rejection of the document by the Churches of Romania and Greece, the eighth plenary session was finally held in July 2000 in Emmitsburg, Maryland, USA. The theme discussed was the “Ecclesiological and Canonical Implications of Uniatism”⁶⁴. Since an agreed statement was not reached on the basic theological concept of “uniatism”, a communiqué was issued which described the nature of the discussions: “Although reactions were generally positive, these documents met with some reserve and even outright opposition, sometimes from each side. Therefore, it was felt necessary to continue the reflection by the Joint Commission in order to find common understanding on this extremely thorny question. The discussions of this plenary were far-reaching, intense and thorough. They touched upon many theological and canonical questions connected with the existence and the activities of the Eastern Catholic Churches. However, since agreement was not reached on the basic theological concept of uniatism, it was decided not to have a common statement at this time. For this reason, the members will report to their Churches who will indicate how to overcome this obstacle for the peaceful continuation of the dialogue”⁶⁵.

⁶⁰ *Growth in Agreement II...* 680-685.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 681, §12.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 680, §3.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 685, §35.

⁶⁴ http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/ch_orthodox_docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20000719_baltimore_en.html.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

In 2006 in Belgrade, the plenary session discussed the text entitled: “The Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church: Conciliarity and Authority in the Church,” at three levels of the Church's life: local, regional and universal which was initially prepared by the Joint Coordinating Committee in Moscow in 1990 and studied in Rome in 2005. This would deepen a theology of communion to enable a profound discussion on two central issues in the context of relations between the two churches namely, the primacy of the Bishop of Rome and the question of “uniatism.” The revised text in light of the observations and comments would be submitted to the following plenary session⁶⁶.

In October 2007 in Ravenna, Italy, the tenth plenary session issued the statement, entitled “Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church: Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity and Authority”⁶⁷, a document that acknowledges the primacy of the bishop of Rome to be further studied in greater depth: The document is divided into the following sections: I. The Foundations of Conciliarity and of Authority; 1. Conciliarity; II. The threefold actualization of Conciliarity and Authority; 1. The Local Level; 2. The Regional Level; 3. The Universal Level. In regard to the ancient five major sees and the Ecumenical Councils the Ravenna documents says that “These Councils were ecumenical not just because they assembled together bishops from all regions and particularly those of the five major sees, Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, according to the ancient order (taxis)... Both sides agree that this canonical taxis was recognised by all in the era of the undivided Church. Further, they agree that Rome, as the Church that “presides in love” according to the phrase of St Ignatius of Antioch (To the Romans, Prologue), occupied the first place in the taxis, and that the bishop of Rome was therefore the protos among the patriarchs... Conciliarity at the universal level, exercised in the ecumenical councils, implies an active role of the bishop of Rome, as protos of the bishops of the major sees”⁶⁸.

However, the question remains to be studied in greater depth with the following perspective: “What is the specific function of the bishop of the “first see” in an ecclesiology of koinonia and in view of what we have said on conciliarity and authority in the present text?”⁶⁹.

⁶⁶ http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/o-rc/e_o-rc-info.html.

⁶⁷ http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/o-rc/doc/e_o-rc_ravenna.html.

⁶⁸ Ibid., §35-42.

⁶⁹ Ibid., §45.

E. Dialogue with the Luther World Federation⁷⁰

Following the undertakings between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Lutheran World Federation, an inter-Orthodox Commission was set to prepare an official dialogue. A series of separate Orthodox and Lutheran meetings were held in 1978, 1979 and 1980. The Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission met for the first time in Espoo, Finland in 1981 and discussed "Participation in the Mystery of the Church." The goal towards which the dialogue should be directed was formulated: "full communions as full mutual recognition between Orthodox and Lutherans. The Second Joint Commission was held in May 1983 at Limassol, Cyprus and concerned itself chiefly with the question of method; "by what route could the staged goal be approached" since there were severe disagreements and differences on a joint text on Divine Revelation which was discussed during the following joint session⁷¹.

The commission had adopted the following statements: "Divine Revelation" at the third plenary in May 1985, Allentown, USA⁷² and "Scripture and Tradition" at the fourth plenary, in May/June 1987⁷³, Crete/Chania, Greece. The first statement showed the need to systematize the study of the common theological fundamentals. It laid the foundation for further clarification and discussion. It says that "The holy Tradition is the authentic expression of divine revelation in the living experience of the church, the body of the Word incarnate. The church in its sacraments and spiritual life transmits this "euangelion" of our salvation through the operation of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, apostolic faith is not only a matter of proclamation but an incarnate faith (Heb. 11:1; *enhypostatos pistis*, Maximus Confessor, *Quaestiones* 25, PG 90, 336D) in the church. This "euangelion" of salvation is the content of the holy Tradition, preserved, confessed and transmitted in scripture, in the lives of the saints in all ages, and in the conciliar tradition of the church...Regarding the relation of scripture and Tradition, for centuries there seemed to have been a deep difference between Orthodox and Lutheran teaching. Orthodox hear with satisfaction the affirmation of the Lutheran theologians that the formula "sola scriptura" was always intended to point to God's revelation, God's saving act through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, and therefore to the holy Tradition of the church, as expressed in this paper, against human traditions that darken the authentic teaching in the church"⁷⁴.

In the meantime, "The Third Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference notes with satisfaction that the dialogue has had a good start, and that its members have chosen to

⁷⁰ For the collection of texts see site: of the Lutheran World Federation: http://www.lutheran-world.org/What_We_Do/OEA/Bilateral_Relations/OEA-Lutheran-Orthodox.html A collection of texts in French are available on CD: André Birmelé and Jacques Terme, eds. *Accords et dialogues œcuméniques, bilatéraux/multilatéraux, français/européens/internationaux*, Editions Olivétan, Lyon 4^{ème} trimestre 07.

⁷¹ *Growth in Agreement II...*, Historical Introduction 219.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 222-223.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 224-225.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 224-225, §3 & 11.

examine ecclesiology first, a theme which is tied to the most significant problems and theological differences which follow from them. The Conference hopes that, in bilateral discussions and during the working-out of common texts, both the academic and the Church aspects of every question will be equally accentuated. Certain difficulties can be foreseen in the course of this dialogue. Nevertheless, we hope that, with God's help, it will prove both fruitful and useful"⁷⁵.

The statement on "The Canon and the Inspiration of the Holy Scripture"⁷⁶ at the fifth plenary in September 1989, in Bad Segeberg, Germany, was also adopted, related to Divine Revelation: "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work' (2 Tim. 3:16f.). 'No prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God' (2 Pet. 1:20f)...Authentic interpreters of the Holy Scripture are persons who have had the same experience of revelation and inspiration within the body of Christ as the biblical writers had. Therefore it is necessary for authentic understanding that anybody who reads or hears the Bible be inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Orthodox believe that such authentic interpretation is the service of the fathers of the church especially expressed in the decisions of the ecumenical councils. Lutherans agree in principle. Lutheran confessional writings affirm that no one can believe in Jesus Christ by one's own reason or abilities but that it is the Holy Spirit who calls, gathers and illuminates believers through the gospel even as he calls, gathers and enlightens the whole church on earth keeping it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith (Luther's Small Catechism)"⁷⁷.

The following statements related to Authority in and of the Church were adopted: A. "The Ecumenical Councils"⁷⁸ at the seventh plenary in July 1993, Sandbjerg, Denmark; B. "Understanding of Salvation in the Light of the Ecumenical Councils"⁷⁹ at the eighth plenary in August 1995, Limassol, Cyprus; C. "Salvation: Grace, Justification and Synergy"⁸⁰ at the ninth plenary, in July/August 1998, Sigtuna, Sweden.

The following texts were approved "On the The Mystery of the Church": they were: A. "Word and Sacraments (Mysteria) in the Life of the Church"⁸¹ at the tenth plenary in November 2000, Damascus, Syria B. "Mysteria/Sacraments as Means of Salvation"⁸² at the eleventh plenary in October, 2002, Oslo, Norway; C. "Baptism and Chrismation

⁷⁵ *The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* 6(1987) 49.

⁷⁶ *Growth in Agreement It...*, 226-229.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 228-229, §11, 19.

⁷⁸ *Growth in Agreement III...*, 12-14.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 15-18.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 19-22.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 23-25.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 26-28.

(Confirmation) as Sacraments of Initiation into the Church”⁸³ at the twelfth plenary in October 2004, Duràu, Romania; D. “The Holy Eucharist in the Life of the Church”⁸⁴ at the thirteenth plenary in November 2006, Bratislava, Slovak Republic.

In summary, “The Church's authority is grounded in God's saving revelation in Jesus Christ to which the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and Holy Tradition bear witness. Moreover the Church as the body of Christ is empowered by the Holy Spirit”⁸⁵... Both Orthodox and Lutherans affirm that apostolic authority was exercised in the ecumenical councils of the church... Through ecumenical councils the Holy Spirit has led the Church to preserve and transmit the faith once delivered to the saints. They handed on the prophetic and apostolic truth, formulated it against heresies of their time and safeguarded the unity of the churches. They also both affirmed “that the teachings of the ecumenical councils are authoritative for our churches”⁸⁶. The understanding of salvation was discussed in light of the above joint affirmation.

They also affirmed “that Christians, led by the Holy Spirit, grow through faith in the experience of God as a mystery, nurtured by the liturgical life of the Church, by the apostolic faith, by prayer, and by sharing in the fellowship of the local Church (cf. Acts 2:42).⁸⁷ Paragraph 8 states the position of the Orthodox church on the question of salvation which is “is a gratuitous gift of God offered in Jesus Christ to all human beings (1 Tim. 2:4; Jn. 3:17), which they must both freely choose (Rev. 3:20) and work for (1 Cor. 3:13, 15:58; Phil. 2:12), referred to as synergia according to St. Paul (1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 6:1). The Lutherans “understand the saving work which God accomplishes in Christ through the Holy Spirit primarily through the concept of “justification”. For Lutherans, justification is God's gracious declaration of the forgiveness of sins for the sake of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, and at the same time the free gift of new life in him”⁸⁸.

The different concepts of salvation as purification, illumination, and glorification, with the use of synergia, according to the Orthodox teaching and tradition and as justification and sanctification, with the use of sola fide, according to the Lutheran teaching and tradition were further explored at the following session. The statement at the ninth plenary says that “Both Lutherans and Orthodox teach that divine grace operates universally and that God freely grants grace to all human beings. God's saving grace does not operate by necessity or in an irresistible manner, since human beings can reject it. Regarding the way in which salvation is appropriated by the believers, Lutherans, by teaching that justification and salvation are by grace alone through faith (sola gratia, sola fide), stress the absolute priority of divine grace in salvation. The Orthodox also affirms the absolute priority of divine grace. They underline that it is God's grace which enables

⁸³ Ibid., 29-32.

⁸⁴ <http://www.helsinki.fi/~risaarin/lutortjointext.html#euch>.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 12, §1.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 12, §2.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 15-16, I, §4.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 17.

our human will to conform to the divine will (cf. Phil 2:13) in the steps of Jesus praying, “not as I will but as You will” (Matt. 26:39), so that we may work out our salvation in fear and trembling (cf. Phil. 2:12). While Lutherans... recognize the personal responsibility of the human being in the acceptance or refusal of divine grace through faith in the growth of faith and obedience to God”⁸⁹.

It was affirmed in the statement “A “Word and Sacraments (mysteria) in the life of the Church” that both that “salvation is real participation by grace in the nature of God”⁹⁰ and that the sacraments/mysteria are “means of salvation, i.e., specific divine acts of the church for the salvation of believers». By means of the sacraments, “Christ imparts his saving grace to believers,” for the “grace of the sacraments is a free gift of God in the Holy Spirit”⁹¹. The agreement reached in Oslo gave “emphasis to the sacraments of initiation of the ancient church, that is, baptism, chrismation, and the eucharist”⁹². In 2004 they had explored areas of convergence and divergence in the process of Christian initiation focusing on the three events of death with Christ, resurrection with Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Commission in 2006 in Bratislava was able to recognize broad areas of agreement in the respective traditions’ understanding of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church. For its next meeting, the Commission agreed to extend its reflection on The Holy Eucharist in the Life of the Church and to work on the following topics: Preparation and Celebration of the Eucharist; Eucharist and Ecology (including Human Society).

F. Dialogue with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches⁹³

The dialogue with the Reformed Churches is a result of preceding local dialogues or contacts in and out of the framework of the ecumenical movement, in particular as a result of meetings between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. A detailed report of these achievements was presented before the first general assembly of the Joint Theological Commission in 1986. The positive position of the Orthodox Church with respect to this dialogue is that it “hopes that the

⁸⁹ Ibid., 20-21, §5.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 21, §6.

⁹¹ Ibid., 23-24, §2.

⁹² Ibid., 27, §6.

⁹³ See site <http://www.warc.ch/dt/er11/index.html#txt10>; For bibliography see Lukas Vischer ed., *Agreed Statements from the Orthodox-Reformed Dialogue, Studies from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches*, no.38, Geneva, WARC, 1998; Torrance, TF ed., *Theological Dialogue between Orthodox and Reformed Churches*, Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985; Memorandum from First Consultation, Istanbul 1979, Memorandum; and Papers from the Second (1981) and Third Consultations (1983) in Geneva; and Concluding Affirmation: Ibid., *Theological Dialogue between Orthodox and Reformed Churches vol. 2*, Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1993; Ibid., Trinitarian perspectives: Toward doctrinal agreement / Thomas F. Torrance. – Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994; All texts and papers from Kappel 1992 through Zakynthos 1998 were published by Fr Dr. George Dion Dragas in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 43 Numbers 1-4 (1998) 205-619. See also Lukas Vischer, ed., *Agreed Statements from the Orthodox-Reformed Dialogue, Studies from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches*, no.38, Geneva, WARC, 1998.

prospective theological dialogue between the Orthodox and Reformed Churches will begin and develop in a positive and creative fashion. It also expresses the wish that this dialogue will profit from the experiences of other theological dialogues, take into account their positive conclusions, and avoid repeating their negative ones”⁹⁴.

The methodology, list of subjects and program were determined at a preparatory meeting held at the Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in March 1986. It was decided that an official dialogue be open by creating a joint commission. The first subject for the official dialogue was: “The Doctrine of the Trinity on the Basis of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed”: 1) The Trinity as sources of the church’s faith, worship, and life. a) The incarnation of Christ: revelation of the triune God as love; b) The divine-human life of Christ, communicated to humankind by the Holy Spirit. 2) The church as body of Christ: experience of, and witness to, the new life in Christ through the centuries a) The sacraments in the life of the church; b) The royal priesthood and priestly office. 3) The church’s mission in the world: reconciliation, service, work for justice and peace. Furthermore, it was decided that two papers should be prepared on 1) “who are we?”, and 2) “evaluation of the papers read at earlier local dialogues” which mutually enhance relations between the two traditions on an international and local level⁹⁵.

The first plenary session of the official joint theological commission began in Leuenberg, Switzerland, in March 1988⁹⁶. The subjects discussed were: 1) ecclesiological profiles of the Orthodox and Reformed traditions; 2) information on earlier discussions between Orthodox and Reformed theologians and church on a local or regional level; 3) an examination of the doctrine of the Trinity in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed on the basis of some patristic texts and the dogmatic teaching of the Orthodox and Reformed traditions. An evaluation of the conversations was made following clarifications on ecclesiology and theology and the notion of the “undivided church” and diverging views expressed on subjects such as relation of nature to grace, or the relation of sanctification to deification on the relation between sanctification to deification, the notion of Tradition and status of the Nicene Creed as their starting point in the two traditions. Furthermore, since a “broad agreement was reached about the essential elements of the doctrine of the Trinity” and at the same many other theological elements were raised it was decided by the Joint Commission to continue the discussion of Trinitarian dogma.

At the second meeting held in Minsk, Byelorussia, in October 1990 the following topics were discussed: 1) the biblical basis for the doctrine of the Trinity; 2) the Trinity and the worship of the church. A Statement on the common understanding of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity was drafted beforehand by a small sub-committee in view of discussion and agreement. The discussion was predominantly based on the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed and with particular attention given to the teaching of Saints

⁹⁴ *The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* 6(1987) 49.

⁹⁵ *Growth in Agreement II...* Historical Introduction, 275.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 277-279.

Athanasius, Basil and Gregory the Theologian. The final “Agreement Statement on the Holy Trinity”⁹⁷ approved at the third meeting in 1992 in Kappel, Switzerland, states at the beginning: “We confess together the evangelical and ancient faith of the catholic church in “the uncreated, consubstantial and coeternal Trinity”, promulgated by the councils of Nicea (AD 325) and Constantinople (AD 381)”⁹⁸. The Agreed Statement includes the following sections: The self-revelation of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Three Divine Persons, The order of Divine Persons in the Trinity, Trinity in unit and unity, the one monarchy, Perichoresis: the mutual indwelling of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, One Being, three Persons, and the apostolic and catholic faith.

The third meeting held in March 1992 at Kappel, Switzerland continued the discussion on the Trinity and produced the “Significant Features. A Common Reflection on the Agreed Statement”⁹⁹ (Trinitarian languages, The Monarchy and the Ecumenical significance) was approved and concludes in saying that: “What is provided by the agreed statement of the Orthodox theologians in the East and the Reformed theologians in the West is pre-eminently a statement on the triunity of God as Trinity in unity and unity in Trinity”¹⁰⁰.

The fourth session held in 1994 at Limassol, Cyprus, produced an “Agreed Statement on Christology”¹⁰¹. Presentations were on the “The Holy Trinity in Creation and Incarnation”, “Antidosis (Communicatio) Idiomatum and Theosis (Deificatio) of the Human Nature” and “The Christ of Revelation and the Christ of History”¹⁰². It is stated that they “Both agree that their teaching about Trinity and incarnation reflects the encounter with the reality of God as revealed in Christ” in light of two different kind of approach which, however, are not incompatible”¹⁰³. Both Orthodox and Reformed agreed that a relations exists between the incarnation and creation: “Creation is not part of the eternal nature of God. We understand it to be a deliberate act of God that he might share that love which he is with that which he is not. Creation is then rooted in the mutual love of the persons of the triune God. Thus understood the incarnation is the key which opens to us the intention, plan, meaning and goal of the creation. In the incarnation of the Son the purpose of creation is fully revealed”¹⁰⁴.

⁹⁷ Ibid 280-284. A small sub-committee was entrusted with the task to improve the style of the text in March 1991.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 280.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 285-287.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 287.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 288-290.

¹⁰² *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 43 Numbers 1-4 (1998) 351.

¹⁰³ “The Orthodox approach takes its beginning in the mystery of the incarnation which includes the whole saving economy as it is proclaimed in the Bible, confessed in the patristic tradition and experiences in the Divine Liturgy. The starting point of the Reformed approach to Christology and the mystery of the Trinity is the scriptural witness about Trinity and incarnation reflects the encounter with the reality of God as revealed in Christ.” *Growth in Agreement II...* 288.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 290.

The fifth and sixth sessions, held in Aberdeen, Scotland, in 1996¹⁰⁵, and in Zakynthos, Greece, in 1998,¹⁰⁶ dealt with the mystery, nature, unity and membership of the Church: The church as the Body of Christ, The Body of Christ and Membership of the Body of Christ rooted in the Gospel and in the Apostolic witness to Christ as taught by the Father of the Church.

The seventh session in April 2000 in Pittsburgh proceeded to discuss baptism, confirmation and chrismation, and the apostolicity of the church along the lines of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, “as an undergirding of our understanding of initiation into the Body of Christ, the Church”. The Common Statement was characterized as preliminary since further clarification would be needed on the questions addressed. The joint text was entitled “Membership and Incorporation into the Body of Christ”¹⁰⁷.

The discussion was followed up at the eighth meeting in September 2003 at Sibiu, Romania which produced A Common statement on the “Holiness of the Church”¹⁰⁸: The holiness of the Church, Holiness as a divine gift and human task, the Saints, and convergence and divergence.

The ninth session held in October 2005 at Lebanon outlined in a statement the points of convergence on “The Catholicity and Mission of the Church”¹⁰⁹ and some of their implications without neglecting points of divergence. The implications are stated as follows: “The broad convergence outlined above concerning the catholicity of the Church and her mission has several practical implications for our two communions. a) The failure to share the general and special sense of catholicity, to which both Orthodox and Reformed are committed, debilitates their mission to the world, which has not yet come to know salvation in Christ. b) The distinctive historical circumstances that have shaped the Orthodox and the Reformed communions can be understood and explained, but should not become obstacles to their drawing together in the unity of the Catholic Church, or serve as causes for becoming entrenched in their separate ecclesiastical forms. c) The affirmation of their mutual commitment to the catholicity of the Church and of its existence in each other leads them to transcend past conflicts and misunderstandings. They acknowledge that such occasions of past conflicts also entailed other factors (cultural, political, philosophical) which need to be accounted for. They strongly reject proselytism, which shows a lack of respect of the ecclesial identity of the other. d) The Orthodox/Reformed agreement on catholicity both in its extensive and intensive senses, constitutes a challenge to modern notions of individualism, especially the idea that the individual per se is the absolute centre and source of value. They are, therefore, jointly

¹⁰⁵ “Agreed Summary of Discussions on the Identity and Unity of the Church” in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 43 Numbers 1-4 (1998) 533-535.

¹⁰⁶ “The Church as the Body of Christ,” *Ibid.* 617-619.

¹⁰⁷ <http://warc.jalb.de>.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

opposed to the ideology of secularism, which excludes the Church's understanding and practice from shaping our common life".

The tenth session was held in September 2007 in Volos, Greece. The topic discussed was on "Eschatology. Second Coming. The Resurrection of the Dead. Last Judgement," which underlined the importance of the resurrection of Christ not only for the earthly life but also in view of eternal life.

Concluding Remarks

The joint theological texts, as a result of the international bilateral dialogues, are "offered as proposals to the Churches for reconciling previously church-dividing issues. These texts carry weight in proportion to the quality of the theology developed within them through the care and scholarship of the drafters. They remain before the churches for reception and evaluation. Some texts are exploration aimed at increasing mutual understanding and dispelling historical misunderstandings and stereotypes"¹¹⁰. Therefore, the local Orthodox Churches evaluate and analyze the accomplishments of the theological work of the joint theological commissions and the progress which has been made on the question of unity: "The consequence and expression of reciprocally recognized fellowship in the faith is the full, liturgical-canonical communion of Churches, the realization of organic unity in the one Body of Christ. The liturgical and canonical consequences, which result from ecclesial fellowship, will be elucidated and regulated by the Church on the basis of the tradition of the undivided Church. This fellowship does not signify uniformity in liturgical order and ecclesial practice, but rather embodies an expression of the fact that the historically legitimated development of the one faith of the ancient and undivided Church is preserved in each of the participating Churches. This fellowship also does not require the subjection of one Church with its tradition to the other Church, for this would contradict the reality of the fellowship. The Churches united in full communion will fulfil their responsibilities in the world not isolated from each other, but on principle together"¹¹¹.

III. BILATERAL INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUES

A. Introduction

When considering the ecumenical vocation of the Orthodox Church, one must also mention the endeavours for inter-religious dialogue and co-operation. The decisions of the Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conferences continue to provide the underpinning for the

¹¹⁰ *Growth in Agreement III...*, xiii.

¹¹¹ Agreed statement of the VIIth and last plenary assembly on "Ecclesial Communion: Presuppositions and Consequences" of the Joint Orthodox-Old Catholic Theological Commission in Kavala, Greece, 17 October 1987, in *Koinonia Auf Altkirchlicher Basis...* 228-229.

Orthodox Church's vision of inter-religious dialogue. In the preparation process for the Holy and Great Council, the First Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference in November 1976 declared the will of the Orthodox Church to collaborate in a spirit of mutual understanding with the other religions to wipe out fanaticism and establish peaceful coexistence between the peoples. The 1976 proposal was renewed and developed more systematically in the extensive and truly important Declaration of the Third Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference (Chambésy 1986) on the "The contribution of the local Orthodox Churches to the realization of peace, justice, freedom, fraternity and love between nations, and the removal of racial and other discriminations". This Declaration invited the local Orthodox Churches "to contribute to inter-religious collaboration, and thereby, to nations and to the triumph of the goods of freedom and peace in the world for the well being of contemporary man, independently of race and religion. It is understood of course that this collaboration excludes all syncretism, as well as any attempt on the part of any religion to impose itself on the others"¹¹².

The quest for peace in the world was pursued on an international level, with the blessing of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, by initiating a series of inter-religious academic meetings/consultations with both Judaism and Islam in view of overcoming the traditional misunderstandings and prejudices. We are called to get to know one another, each of us as we are, so that we accept the others as they are, without losing our own identity. This has been the spirit of the meetings of the Orthodox Christians with Jew and Muslims. The Ecumenical Patriarchate's inspiring vision of inter-religious dialogue was indeed prophetic as we are now witnessing an explosion of initiatives in this area in all sectors of society, on a local, regional and international level. The historical survey of the commitment to inter-religious dialogue shall be restricted more or less to the bilateral academic meetings/consultations organized initially by the Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (Chambésy-Geneva) and now by the Office of inter-religious and intercultural relations of the Liaison Office of the Orthodox Church to the European Union (Brussels, Belgium).

B. Criteria for Inter-religious Dialogue¹¹³

Having identified the challenges facing the Orthodox Church and religion in general, the view of the world can be summarized as follows: "All of us know that the national, political and ideological ferment of recent times has relegated the role of religion to a

¹¹² Damaskinos Papandreou, D., Die Vorbereitung der panorthodoxen Synode. Aktuelle theologische Fragen und Ueberlegungen, in *Pro Oriente. Auf dem Weg zur Einheit des Glaubens, Towards the unity of faith*, Vienna, 1974, 17.

¹¹³ See article by Metropolitan Damaskinos Papandreou, "Le Dialogue de l'Eglise Orthodoxe avec le Judaïsme et l'Islam. Expériences de conflit, de réconciliation et de coexistence", in *EYXAPIΣTHPIA-EUCHARISTERIA. Festschrift für Damaskinos Papandreou Metropolit der Schweiz*, Ekdotike Athenon, Griechenland, 1996, 343-355.

subordinate position when it comes to dealing with the spiritual and social problems of modern man. All of us know that religious discourse has been marginalized in Education in order to bring about the 'autonomous man' posited by the secularized society of our era. Nevertheless, we all know as well that this man is the man of faith, our own man who has grown tired of being crushed under the pressures of religious confrontations, and who seeks in his experience of religion the lost paradise of his sober spiritual dialogue with God, in order that he may regard his fellow human and the world with a clearer vision"¹¹⁴.

The role of religion "should be concerned with the various needs of the life of the faithful on this earth, but should never dissociate these needs from the spiritual content its teaching on the balanced relationship of man with God and with the world"¹¹⁵. The following affirmation could be made: "God and man are the two immovable poles, so to speak, both for the divine plan, as much as for the spiritual history of mankind. This dialectic excludes, on the one hand, any banning of God to an idle metaphysical inaccessibility, and on the other hand, any autonomous ideological annihilation of God after the prototypes of the anthropocentric indifferentism and the positivist atheism of our times. It is clear, however, that any one of these extremes not only distorts the relation of man with God or with the world, but also decisively alters the authentic content of the common religious faith concerning the unity and the brotherhood of the human race according to the rationality of the divine act of creation"¹¹⁶.

The concern for unity and brotherhood would be inconceivable without the belief and faith in the Christian doctrine of the ontological unity of the human race. This is the very essence of the universal salutary work of Christ. The fundamental theological teaching on the ontological unity of the human race remains the theological foundation of the decisions of the Third Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference: "In the incarnation of the Word of God and the deification of man, creation finds both origin and fulfilment. 'Christ, remodelling the old man' (Hipp., Haer., 10,34. PG 16, 3454) 'so doing deified man as a whole, which is the premise of the fulfilment of our hope' (Eus., d.e. 4,14. PG 22,289). In this regard, Saint Gregory the Theologian remarks that 'for us humanity is one, namely the entire human race' (Greg. Naz., or. 31,15. PG 36,149). This teaching of Christianity on the sanctity of humanity is the everlasting source of all Christian endeavours to safeguard the value and dignity of the human person". In view of this essential aspect of Christian teaching, the faithful are also invited to engage in inter-religious dialogue.

In this endeavour, it was systematically clearly declared the purpose and nature of the discussions that theologians of both religions should engage in. "They should assess their

¹¹⁴ Closing Address of Metropolitan Damaskinos, Fourth Academic Meeting between Orthodoxy and Judaism, Jerusalem, 1998.

¹¹⁵ Closing Address of Metropolitan Damaskinos, Fourth Academic Meeting between Orthodoxy and Judaism, Jerusalem, 1998.

¹¹⁶ Closing Address of Metropolitan Damaskinos at the Third Academic Meeting between Orthodoxy and Judaism, in *Emmanuel* Vol. 26-27, 1994, 194.

own faith while being ready to listen and, if necessary, to reformulate their thinking". Understanding could not be brought about by silencing or glossing over contradictions. If basic differences were brought to light, they should become the object of lively discussion, without polemical self-assertion or recrimination. Tolerance should lead to a meaningful discussion; but, as Goethe said, tolerance should be a passing thing and must change to recognition. Merely to tolerate was to offend. Of course the special mission of Christianity in going beyond formal tolerance and aiming for religious peace is determined by the magnitude of its historical responsibilities¹¹⁷. We are reminded of the words of Saint Gregory of Nyssa who said that "the way is not impossible; the impossible itself can become the way towards the common Father"¹¹⁸.

"In this regard, the inter-religious consultations were not only timely but also significant" since they began to be held shortly before the "period of many nationalist, religious and spiritual confusions that were caused both by the rapid collapse of the atheist totalitarian regimes of existing socialism, but also by the 'new world order' which is being put forward on a global level, with primarily economic criteria and with the obvious questioning of spiritual values"¹¹⁹.

C. Orthodoxy and Judaism

The dialogue between Christianity and Judaism is indeed the longest-term inter-religious dialogue in the world history of faith and the spirit¹²⁰. With respect to modern inter-religious dialogue, the Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate¹²¹, with the blessing of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, jointly collaborated with the World Jewish Congress. The series of academic consultations began with an encounter which originated in Zurich in 1976 as a result of a lecture given by Metropolitan Damaskinos before the Swiss Society for the Christian-Jewish cooperation on the theme: "The Claim for Absolutism of both Christianity and Judaism, and the necessity for Dialogue between Them", which had a positive reaction on both the Jewish and Orthodox Christian side.

The Academic Meetings were indeed the fruit of a long and creative collaboration with the distinguished representatives of the International Jewish Committee on Inter-religious Consultations (IJCIC), the honourable Dr. Riegner and Mr. Jean Halpérin, who acted on behalf of the World Jewish Congress and of other, recognized Jewish Organizations.

¹¹⁷ Metropolitan Damaskinos of Switzerland (Papandreou), "Truth and Tolerance in Orthodoxy", *Immanuel* 26/27 1994, 225-239.

¹¹⁸ Proceedings of the Christian Orthodox / Jewish Encounter, Lucerne, Switzerland, *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* Volume XXIV, Number 4, 268-269.

¹¹⁹ Opening Address of Metropolitan Damaskinos, Fourth Academic Meeting, Jerusalem, 1998.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Then under the direction of Metropolitan Damaskinos (Papandreou) of Switzerland.

Four Jewish-Orthodox Meetings¹²²: the first of its kind to be held, in a broad representative international framework, in Lucerne (Switzerland) on the theme “The Notion of Law in Judaism and Christianity”¹²³ in 1977; a second in Bucharest in 1979 on the “Role of Tradition in both Religions”; a third in Athens on “Continuity and Renewal” in 1993¹²⁴; and the fourth was hosted at Ma’aleh HaChamisha (near Jerusalem, Israel) in 1998 on the critical issue of the “Encounter of Christian Orthodoxy and Judaism with Modernity”¹²⁵. Under the direction of Metropolitan Emmanuel of France, Director of the Liaison Office of the Orthodox Church to the European Union (Brussels), the fifth meeting was held at Thessaloniki, Greece in May 2003, “Faithfulness to Our Sources: Our Common Commitment to Peace and Justice” and the sixth in Jerusalem, Israel, in March 2007 on “Religious Liberty and the Relationship Between Freedom and Religion”.

D. Christianity and Islam

The series of Muslim-Christian Consultations, which also included representatives of other Christian Churches and ecumenical organisations, was jointly organized by the Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and The Royal Academy for Islamic Civilization Research (Aal al-Bayt Foundation, Amman, Jordan)¹²⁶. There was a common belief and vision shared by both institutions which had been the moving force behind their interest and involvement in interfaith and humanitarian issues, with particular stress on the analogy and commonality between the monotheistic religions.

This common desire led to the successful organization of nine consultations¹²⁷ in all, despite the tragic crises in the Gulf, Balkans and other regions which fostered phenomena of religious intolerance and fanaticism: I “Authority and Religion” (Chambésy November 1986); II 1) “Model of Historical Co-Existence between Muslims and Christians and its Future Prospects” 2) “Common Humanitarian Ideals for Muslims and Christians” (Symposium) (Amman, November 1987); III “Peace and Justice” (Chambésy, December 1988); IV “Religious Pluralism” (Istanbul, September 1989); V “Youth and the Values of Moderation” (Amman, July 1993); VI “Education for Understanding and Co-operation” (Athens, September 1994); VII “The Educational System in Islam and Christianity” (Amman, June 1996); VIII “Perspectives of Co-operation and Participation between Muslims and Christians on the Eve of the New Century” (Istanbul, June 1997); and IX

¹²² For a historical survey and analysis of the inter-religious dialogue between Orthodoxy and Judaism, see “Le dialogue de l’Eglise orthodoxe avec la Tradition juive” in *Contacts* 216 (octobre-décembre 2006) 516-527 (in French).

¹²³ For proceedings see *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, Volume XXIV, 4, 1979, 265-327.

¹²⁴ Proceedings of the Third Academic Meeting between Orthodoxy and Judaism, March 21-24, 1993, (Athens, Greece). “Continuity and Renewal” in *Immanuel*, Vol. 26-27, 1994. The volume includes a History and Bibliography of Dialogue between Orthodox Christian and Jews, 197-249.

¹²⁵ The proceedings are unpublished.

¹²⁶ Then under the supreme chairmanship of His Royal Highness the then Crown Prince El Hassan bin Talal of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. It is now called *The Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought*.

¹²⁷ The proceedings of the ten consultations are unpublished.

“Muslims and Christians in Modern Society: Images of the Other and the Meaning of Co-citizenship” (Amman, November 1998)¹²⁸. The Xth Consultation was co-organised in collaboration between The Kingdom of Bahrain and The Office for Inter-religious and Intercultural Relations of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (Brussels, Belgium)¹²⁹. It was held in Manama, Bahrain in October 2002 on the subject “The Role of Religion in Peaceful Coexistence.

The following seven points were proposed to formulate a necessary framework for sincere cooperation between the two religions - which would also be applicable with Judaism - and would be an introduction to a sharing in the development of a value system.

First, that our religions are not willing to disturb the divine heavenly peace to serve the deplorable military hysteria of the Earth’s leaders.

Second, that our religions are not willing to overlook their teaching about the unity of the human race in order to serve the recent ideologies of fragmentation and social conflicts.

Third, that our religions are not willing to replace the call put forward in their teachings for peace and justice in the world with the demand in more recent ideology for “a war of all against all”.

Fourth, that our religions are willing, through inter-faith dialogue, to heal the wounds of the historic past in order jointly to serve the weak and suffering people of our time in a more consistent and responsible way.

Fifth, that our religions are willing to contribute jointly to publicising the principles of mutual respect and sincere understanding in educational curricula and textbooks, so that the unhealthy phenomena of blind fanaticism and religious intolerance may gradually be eliminated.

Sixth, that our religions are willing to cooperate through modern ecumenical dialogue to defend peace, social justice and human rights in relations between individuals and peoples, irrespective of any religious, national, racial, social or other differences.

Seventh, that our religions are willing to support their people’s governments and international organisations in order to achieve fuller awareness of these fundamental principles and the peaceful co-existence between the peoples.

The above points were a natural consequence of “a dialogue of believers in the faiths”, “a dialogue with a human content, with a human face, with a human responsibility for the

¹²⁸ Two papers were presented on each topic: one from a Muslim point of view and another from a Christian point of view and each paper had two discussants, a discussant of the writer’s faith and another discussant.

¹²⁹ Under the direction of Metropolitan Emmanuel (Adamakis) of France.

here and now and to the tomorrow which we can influence through positive action and through our shared fear and love of God”¹³⁰. This human dimension of the relations between the participants representing their respective religious traditions and their common commitment towards the future marked indelibly the academic consultations.

E. Correlation of Religion and Politics

Due to the academic nature of the consultations, speakers and participants included leading specialists and recognized intellectuals, religious and political figures, academicians, researchers and youth in the concerned areas. The presence of highly respected and competent representatives in the area of common interests with Judaism and Islam were always guaranteed. This combination made it possible to retain some balance between the theoretical principles and practical proposals on specific questions that affected the faithful of both religions in a given State, region or on an international level. The Consultations were always organized with great wisdom. Speakers analyzed the different approaches of both religions on the topics in order to indicate an accepted framework for sincere collaboration not only to purge the prejudices of the historical past, but also to confront more decisively the oppressive problems common to all people in our times.

Besides the high quality of papers presented by each side, there has always been a long tradition that, on the occasion of the inaugural sessions, messages be read from The Ecumenical Patriarchs Demetrios I and Bartholomew I¹³¹ as well as by Patriarchs Justin of Romania (Bucharest, 1979) and Diodoros I of Jerusalem (Jerusalem, 1998) who conveyed their blessings and wishes for the success of the consultations.

There was a recognition of the importance of international dialogue with political representatives in order to engage them in such a confidence building exercise has made an essential contribution to furthering relations between religion and states. The views of the correlation between religion and politics were set out at the Fifth Academic Muslim-Christian Consultation in Amman, 1993¹³²: they “are inevitable in the history of peoples, but the limits of their relation are defined to a greater or lesser degree in Islam and Christianity. In both religions, the religious message cannot be dissipated into circumstantial or groundless political objectives. The political theology of both religions cannot and should not be exhausted in an unambiguous theology of the politics of the contemporary state. Religious values enlighten the field of political deontology but

¹³⁰ Opening Address of Metropolitan Damaskinos, Seventh Academic Muslim-Christian Consultation, Amman, 1996.

¹³¹ There was a special occasion, as well, during which the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I was present at both opening and closing sessions due to venue of the Seventh Academic Muslim-Christian Consultation in Istanbul (1997).

¹³² Opening Address of Metropolitan Damaskinos, Fifth Academic Muslim-Christian Consultation, Amman, 1993.

cannot and should not be absorbed by it, because otherwise we succumb to the odious temptation of Mediaeval Wars of Religion which with their blind fanaticism will accelerate the course of humanity towards complete catastrophe. It was also said that the "State can no longer do everything by itself"¹³³.

In view of the challenges of the contemporary situation, reference was made at the Third Academic Consultation between Orthodoxy and Judaism in Athens, 1993 by the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs of Greece, Mr. G. Souflias, on the important role of Education: "In contemporary societies, wherever competition and rivalry are inevitable presuppositions of survival, in the context of the recent socio-political developments that have brought the peoples much closer than they were in the past, we all need to take stand up for what unites us and to respect with understanding what separates us. This can be achieved through a dynamic and constructive Education, such that opens horizons in the thought of man without, however, holding him captive to designs and prejudices of the past. Only when we come to subordinate our individual interest to the general one, when we are able to consider the problem of others as our problem, when the powerful feel that they have a duty - and self-interest I would say - to help sincerely in a symmetrical development of peoples and countries, which are today confronted with insuperable problems arising from failures in their social organization, economy and Education, only then we shall be able to rest assured that another holocaust of whatever form will not reoccur again in the world. Because next to the holocaust of human lives, there is the holocaust of ideas and of spirit, the holocaust of values, of the environment, of quality of life etc".

In light of the political will to implement concrete proposals for the necessary solutions to modern practical issues, the academic meetings often adopted certain principles in their communiqués. For example, "First, the full and unconditional constitutional and legislative guarantee of full freedom of conscience and the other religious freedoms for all subjects of Judaic, Christian and Muslim states, and Second, the legislative protection of equality before the law and all the internationally recognized social rights of religious others in the constantly expanding pluralist composition of the society in virtually all modern states... These proposals will help governments to assume their statutory responsibility to protect human rights more effectively, and help local societies to respect the inviolable rights of persons of other religions"¹³⁴.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The aim of inter-religious dialogues is a sign in the forefront of courageous dialogue in our times and reminds us of our responsibility to seek the best means of understanding

¹³³ Opening address of Metropolitan Damaskinos at the Fifth Muslim-Christian Consultation, Chambésy/Geneva, 1988.

¹³⁴ Communiqué, Fourth Academic Consultation between Orthodoxy and Judaism, Jerusalem, 1998.

and reconciliation. The completion of the academic consultations certainly does not suggest the exhaustion of the agenda, or of the contents of their discussions on every topic, or finally to the fruits of our rich discussions envisaging the purification of the historical memory.

The work of each consultation refers more to the new spirit and the new prospects of the academic dialogue, which despite the circumstantial difficulties, continues on a broader representative basis and with a clearer realism. As a message for our times with respect to the Orthodox Church's commitment to the Orthodox tradition and commitment to the future of dialogue with Judaism and Islam I will conclude with the following: "Certainly, the complete avoidance of friction in the course of our theological discussions, although very desirable, is not always possible. What is possible, however, is the constructive articulation of theological opinions in a spirit of mutual understanding and high sense of responsibility, so that the agony of contemporary man may not be exhausted within an abstract or unrelated theological argumentation. The spiritual struggle of contemporary man for his relationship with God and the world is strained from his spiritual confusion, which is provoked by contemporary social changes on a global scale. Both religions [the Orthodox Church with Judaism on the one hand and with Islam on the other] are expected to overcome any interior isolation and/or their competitive aggression in order to offer to contemporary man the necessary spiritual support as he faces the eddy of the nihilistic provocations. Our academic Meeting could and should bear witness to the necessity and the spirit of such a message for the contemporary man who is encapsulated within so many cul-de-sacs. Hope never puts one to shame!"¹³⁵.

¹³⁵ Opening Address, Third Academic Meeting between Orthodoxy and Judaism, Athens, 1993.