

ANGLICAN-ORIENTAL ORTHODOX INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION

HOLY ETCHMIADZIN, ARMENIA, NOVEMBER 5–10, 2002

AGREED STATEMENT REVISED CAIRO, EGYPT OCTOBER 13–17, 2014

**CHRISTOLOGY**

**INTRODUCTION**

In 1990, the second Forum of representatives of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Churches of Anglican Communion, meeting at the Monastery of St Bishoy in Wadi el Natroun, Egypt, was able to produce the following statement: *God, as revealed in the life, teaching, passion, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ calls His people into union with Himself. Living by the Holy Spirit, His own people have been given authority to proclaim this Good News to all creation.*

The Forum was also able to suggest that an agreement on Christology between the Oriental Orthodox and the Anglican Communion was now possible, taking note of the detailed theological work done by representatives of the two families of Orthodoxy between 1964 and 1971 resulting in the Agreed Statements of 1989 and 1990, the work done in the unofficial Pro Oriente conversations, and of the history of convergence in Christology between the Churches of the Anglican Communion and the Oriental Orthodox Churches. To this must now be added the Agreed Statement on Christology of the Reformed-Oriental Orthodox Dialogue (Driebergen, Netherlands, September 13, 1994).

Our first meeting as the Anglican-Oriental Orthodox International Commission was held in Holy Etchmiadzin, Armenia, November 5–10, 2002, following the meeting of the Preparatory Committee in Midhurst, England, July 27–30, 2001. It produced an Agreed Statement on Christology. This text was sent to the participating Churches following this meeting and again following the second meeting of the Commission held in Woking, England, October 3–7, 2013. The third meeting of the Commission, held in Cairo, Egypt, October 13–17, 2014, reviewed these responses and made slight revisions to the text. All this work has been done in a spirit of service of the Risen Christ and of the human race whom He came to save. Our work recognizes the presence of Christ with those who suffer in the tragic history of humanity. It expresses both the hope of a new humanity and

+ Geoffrey Rowell

Metropolitan Bishoy

the hope of glory wherein we will partake in Christ's holiness. With the will for unity-in-Christ within us it has been our privilege in this work of exploration and collaboration to handle the understanding of the person of Christ Jesus (1 John 1.1) together.

We have been able to agree on the following statement:

#### **AGREED STATEMENT ON CHRISTOLOGY**

1. We confess that our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ is the Only-Begotten Son of God who became incarnate and was made human in the fullness of time for us and for our salvation. We believe in God the Son incarnate, perfect in His divinity and perfect in His humanity, consubstantial with the Father according to His divinity and consubstantial with us according to His humanity, for a union has been made of two natures. For this cause we confess one Christ, one Son and one Lord. [Based on the Formula of Re-union, AD 433].

2. Following the teaching of our common father Saint Cyril of Alexandria we can confess together that in the one incarnate nature of the Word of God, two different natures, distinguished in thought alone (*τη θεωρια μονη ti theoria moni*) continue to exist without separation, without division, without change, and without confusion.

3. In accordance with this sense of the unconfused union, we confess the holy Virgin to be Theotokos, because God the Word became incarnate and was made man, and from the very conception united to himself that perfect humanity, without sin, which he took from her. As to the expressions concerning the Lord in the Gospel and in the Epistles, we are aware that theologians understand some in a general way as relating to one single person, and others they distinguish as relating to two natures, explaining those that befit the divine nature according to the divinity of Christ, and those of a humble sort according to his humanity. [Based on the Formula of Re-union, AD 433].

4. Concerning the four adverbs used to qualify the mystery of the hypostatic union: "without commingling" (or confusion) (*ασυγγχτος asyngchtos*), "without change" (*ατρεπτος atreptos*), "without separation" (*αχοριστος achoristos*), and "without division" (*αδιαιρητος adiairetos*), those among us who speak of two natures in Christ are justified in doing so since they do not thereby deny their inseparable indivisible union; similarly, those among us who speak of one incarnate nature of the Word of God are

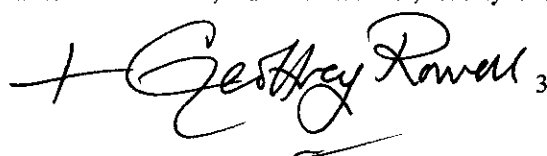
justified in doing so since they do not thereby deny the continuing dynamic presence in Christ of the divine and the human, without change, without confusion. We recognize the limit of all theological language and the philosophical terminology of which it makes and has made use. We are unable to net and confine the mystery of God's utter self-giving in the incarnation of the divine Word in an ineffable, inexpressible and mysterious union of divinity and humanity, which we worship and adore.

5. Both families agree in rejecting the teaching which separates or divides the human nature, both soul and body in Christ, from his divine nature, or reduces the union of the natures to the level of conjoining and limiting the union to the union of persons and thereby denying that the person of Jesus Christ is a single person of God the Word. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Hebrews 13.8 NRSV). Both sides also agree in rejecting the teaching which confuses the human nature in Christ with the divine nature so that the former is absorbed in the latter and thus ceases to exist. Consequently, we reject both the Nestorian and the Eutychian heresies.

6. In the Anglican tradition in the 16th century, the Thirty-nine Articles and the theologian Richard Hooker witness to the continuing relevance of these concerns. Article II affirms 'that two whole and perfect Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided.'<sup>1</sup> In the fifth book of the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, section 5e, Hooker emphasizes the necessary mystery of the person in Christ. "It is not man's ability either to express perfectly or to conceive the manner how (the incarnation) was brought to pass." "In Christ the verity of God and the complete substance of man were with full agreement established throughout the world, until the time of Nestorius." The church, Hooker contends, rightly repudiated any division in the person of Christ. "Christ is a Person both divine and human, howbeit not therefore two persons in one, neither both these in one sense, but a person divine because he is *personally* the Son of God, human, because *he hath* really *the nature* of the children of men." (*Laws* 52.3) "Whereupon it followeth against Nestorius, that no person was born of

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<sup>1</sup> THE Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took Man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance: so that two whole and perfect Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God, and very Man; who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men.

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the Virgin but the Son of God, no person but the Son of God baptized, the Son of God condemned, the Son of God and no other person crucified; which one only point of Christian belief, *the infinite worth of the Son of God*, is the very ground of all things believed concerning life and salvation by that which Christ either did or suffered as man in our belief.” (*Laws* 52.3). In the following consideration of the teaching of St Cyril, Hooker maintains both the importance of St Cyril’s insistence on the unity of the divinity and humanity in the single person of Christ, while repudiating any Eutychian interpretation of that unity. Hooker quotes with approval Cyril’s letter to Nestorius: “His two natures have knit themselves the one to the other, and are in that nearness as incapable of confusion as of distraction. Their coherence hath not taken away the difference between them. Flesh is not become God but doth still continue flesh, although it be now the flesh of God.” (*Laws* 53.2). Anglicans continue to hold this tradition as normative today.

7. The term ‘monophysite’, which has been falsely used to describe the Christology of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, is both misleading and offensive as it implies Eutychianism. Anglicans, together with the wider oikumene, use the accurate term ‘miaphysite’ to refer to the Cyrilline teaching of the family of Oriental Orthodox Churches, and furthermore call each of these Churches by their official title of ‘Oriental Orthodox’. The teaching of this family confesses not a single nature but One Incarnate united divine-human nature of the Word of God. To say ‘a single nature’ would be to imply that the human nature was absorbed in his divinity, as was taught by Eutyches.

8. We agree that God the Word became incarnate by uniting His divine uncreated nature, with its natural will and energy, to created human nature, with its natural will and energy. The union of natures is natural, hypostatic, real and perfect. The natures are distinguished in our mind in thought alone. He who wills and acts is always the one hypostasis of the Logos incarnate with one personal will. In the Armenian tradition in the 12<sup>th</sup> century St Nerses the Graceful (Shenorhali) writes: “We do not think that the divine will opposes the human will and vice versa. We do not think either that the will of the one nature was different at different times, sometimes the will was divine, when He wanted to show His divine power, and sometimes it was human, when He wanted to show human humility.”

9. The perfect union of divinity and of humanity in the incarnate Word is essential to the salvation of the human race. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (John 3.16 NRSV), and "In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor 5.19). The Son of God emptied himself and became human, absolutely free from sin, in order to transform our fallen humanity to the image of His holiness. This is the Gospel we are called to live and proclaim.

10. We submit this revised statement to the responsible authorities of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the responsible authorities of the Anglican Communion for their consideration and action.



The Rt Revd Dr Geoffrey Rowell  
Anglican Co-Chairman

**Signed in Cairo, October 15, 2014**



His Eminence Metropolitan Bishop  
Oriental Orthodox Co-Chairman

Attached is a list of participants in the meetings in Etchmiadzin and in Cairo.

