

ΜΟΝΟΦΥΣΙΤΕΣ
VS
ΜΙΑΦΥΣΙΤΕΣ

μονοφυσίτης VS μίαφυσίτης

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St. George's Coptic Orthodox Church
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ΜONOPHYSITES Vs ΜΙΑΦΥΣΙΤΕΣ

μονοφυσίτης vs μίαφυσίτης

INTRODUCTION

The Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria, one of the Apostolic Oriental Orthodox Churches, and the Syrian, Armenian, Ethiopian, Eritrean and the Malankara Indian Orthodox Churches have long time been stigmatized, disparaged, and falsely accused of holding the heretical Christological theology of Eutyches i.e. **Eutychianism otherwise known as “*monophysitism.*”**

ETYMOLOGY OF THE TERMS ‘MONOPHYSITE’ AND ‘ΜΙΑΦΥΣΙΤΕ’

- ❖ The Greek adjective of the term (μόνος, η, ον) means ‘alone’ (without a companion), ‘only,’¹ ‘without accompaniment, sole, **singly existent.**’²
- ❖ The Greek term (εἷς, μία, ἓν) means ‘**one virtually by union,**’ ‘one and the same,’ ‘one in respect of office and standing,’³ ‘one’ in opposition to many, in opposition to division into parts, and in ethical matters to dissension: ‘to be united most closely.’⁴
- ❖ The Greek term (φύσις) means ‘the nature,’ ‘natural qualities,’ ‘powers,’ ‘constitution’ or ‘condition’ of a person or thing.⁵

¹ Thayer’s *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Hendrickson Publishers, Massachusetts 1996, p.186.

² WJ Perschbacher, ed., *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon*, Hendrickson Publishers, Massachusetts, 1996, p. 279.

³ *ibid.*, p.121.

⁴ Thayer’s, *op. cit.*, p. 418.

⁵ Liddel and Scott’s, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, London, 1996, p.876.

1. MONOPHYSITE

A compound of the Greek words *moni* and *physis* (μονή φύσις) used adjectively in English, the term ‘monophysites’ (μονοφυσίτης) means ‘only nature’ and not ‘one nature’ which is ‘mia physis’ (μία φύσις).⁶ The way in which this etymological meaning is understood concretely can be noted in the words of Walter F. Adeney. ‘The Monophysites,’ he writes, ‘had contended that there was only one nature in Christ, the human and the Divine being fused together. Practically this meant that there was only the Divine nature, because the two did not meet on equal terms, and the overwhelming of the Finite left for our contemplation only the Infinite.’⁷ The understanding is still being propagated in the western world. Thus even the 1958 edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* describes *Monophysitism* as “*The doctrine that in the Person of the Incarnate Christ there was but a single, and that a Divine, Nature, as against the Orthodox teaching of a double Nature, Divine and Human, after the Incarnation,*”⁸ that is, the existence of both natures **in an unconfused union**. In the words of St Cyril the Pillar of Faith, “*The nature of the Word has not passed over into the nature of the flesh. Neither has the nature of the flesh passed over into the nature of the Word, but remaining and being considered in propriety according to the nature of each ineffably and inexplicably united...this has shown forth for us the one physis of the Son; but as I said, incarnate.*”⁹ The fact therefore is that the use of the term cannot be admitted even as a convenient label with reference to the eastern churches which have refused to acknowledge the authority of

⁶ Metropolitan Bishoy, *A Documentary on the Nestorian Assyrian Church of the East*, The Diocese of Damiette, Kafr El Sheikh, and Barray The Monastery of St Demiana, Cairo, 2004, p. 79.

⁷ WF Adeney, *The Greek and Eastern Churches*, Edinburgh, T.&T. Clark, 1908, p. 124 quoted in VC Samuel, *The Council of Chalcedon Re-Examined: A Historical and Theological Survey*, The Christian Literature Society, Madras, 1977, p. xxi.

⁸ Samuel, op. cit., p. xxi, states in footnote 21 that the writer of this particular section in the *Oxford Dictionary*, if he means the eastern churches which opposed the council of 451 held this view, does not seem to be right.

⁹ John I. McEnerny, trans., *The Fathers of the Church: vol 76: St Cyril of Alexandria: Letters 1-50*, CUA Press, Washington DC., 1987, pp.200-201.

Chalcedon, without showing on the strength of evidence that they held this view.¹⁰

2. MIAPHYSITE OF NON CHALCEDONIANS¹¹

The term *mia* means 'one,' but not 'single one' or 'simple numerical one,' as some scholars believe.¹² There is a slight difference between *mono* and *mia*. While the former suggests one single (divine) nature, the latter refers to **one composite and united nature**, as reflected by the Cyrillian formula.¹³ St Cyril maintained that the relationship between the divine and the human in Christ, as Meyendorff puts it, "*does not consist of a simple cooperation, or even interpenetration, but of a union; the incarnate Word is one, and there could be no duplication of the personality of the one redeemer God and man.*"¹⁴

HOW DID IT ALL BEGIN

Eutyches¹⁵ an archmandrite of the monastery of Job in Constantinople, in his keen opposition to Nestorianism was led into the heresy of confounding the natures in Jesus Christ. He denied that the humanity of Christ was like ours, claiming that it melted or dissolved in His divinity as a drop of vinegar would dissolve in the ocean; or, in other words, the two natures had been intermixed into one nature.¹⁶ Eutyches had initially been accused by Eusebius bishop of Dorylaeum for his heretical beliefs.¹⁷ In 448, a Home Synod at Constantinople, was chaired by Flavian the bishop of Constantinople; at this synod Eutyches insisted that the flesh which our

¹⁰ Samuel, op. cit., p.xxi.

¹¹ Fr MF Wahba, *Monophysitism: Reconsidered: A Speech Given at the 12th International Conference of Patristic Studies Oxford, England, August 25, 1995*, St Mary's Coptic Orthodox Church of Sacramento, California, 1995, p.13.

¹² Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, p. 17 quoted in Wahba, op. cit., p. 13.

¹³ Malaty, *Christology*, p. 6 in Wahba, p. 13.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ See details on p. 216.

¹⁶ Metropolitan Bishoy, op. cit., p. 79.

¹⁷ Samuel, op. cit., p. 16.

Lord Jesus Christ took from the Virgin Mary was not 'consubstantial [co-essential]with us' and he hesitated in clarifying his point of view and submitted a written confession of faith which he refused to read himself. The Home Synod demanded from Eutyches to anathematize all who do not say "in two natures after the union" but he refused and said, "*if I anathematize, woe unto me that I condemn my fathers* (as St Cyril the great).¹⁸ He was condemned and appealed to the Emperor.

The Emperor convened the Second Council of Ephesus in 449 that was attended by about a hundred and fifty bishops, the second council of Ephesus had its first session on 8 August. As chief presiding officer Patriarch Dioscorus occupied the first place, after him in order were Julius of Puteoli representing the see of Rome, Juvenal of Jerusalem, Domnus of Antioch and Flavian of Constantinople. Having Eutyches' (deceptive) written confession, Pope Dioscorus sensed that Flavian, Patriarch of Constantinople, and Eusebius of Dorylaem. had joined the Nestorian trend present in the East when Eutyches was demanded by the Home Synod of Constantinople (448) to anathematize all who do not confess two natures after the union. The truth was that Pope Dioscorus sought to fight Nestorianism by rejecting the phrase "two natures after the union" and Bishop Eusebius was urging Patriarch Flavian to fight Eutychianism by asserting the phrase "two natures after the union." Hence the misunderstanding occurred between the two sides, and had later developed into the Chalcedonian dispute.¹⁹

After examining the proceedings of the First Council of Ephesus in 431, and the Home Synod of Constantinople in 448, and reading a written confession of the Orthodox faith which Eutyches had (deceitfully) submitted to this Council, the Second Council of Ephesus in 449 condemned and deposed Flavian, Patriarch of Constantinople, and Eusebius, Bishop of Dorylaem, and acquitted Eutyches and restored him to his clerical post.²⁰

¹⁸ Samuel, p. 22 in Metropolitan Bishoy, op. cit., pp. 80-81.

¹⁹ Metropolitan Bishoy, op. cit., p. 81.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 82.

CONDEMNATION OF POPE DIOSCORUS AT CHALCEDON IN 451

In 451 the Council of Chalcedon was convened. The Council of Chalcedon, which is believed to have condemned Eutyches, did not deal with him but with Pope Dioscorus, the Patriarch of Alexandria. Eutyches himself was not present at the council. Scholars state that Pope Dioscorus was deprived of his office on procedural grounds and not on account of erroneous belief.²¹ At Chalcedon, Pope Dioscorus strongly declared, "*If Eutyches holds notions disallowed by the doctrines of the Church, he deserves not only punishment but even fire. But my concern is for the catholic and apostolic faith, not for any man whomsoever.*"²² The evidence is sufficient for us to look for other reasons for his condemnation. Rome was annoyed by the extraordinary vitality and activity of the Church of Alexandria and its patriarch.²³

As soon as the members of the council had assembled, the legates of Rome demanded that Pope Dioscorus be banished on account of the order of the bishop of Rome, whom they called, "the head of all churches."²⁴ When the imperial authorities asked for a charge to justify the demand, one of the legates said that he "dared to conduct a council without the authorization of the apostolic see, a thing which has never happened and which ought not to happen."²⁵ As a matter of fact, the Ecumenical Council of 381 had been held without the participation, not to say the authorization, of the bishop of Rome, and the Council of 553 against his wishes. It is evident that the legates intended by the words, "the head of all churches," to assert the claim of Rome of ecumenical supremacy over the church.²⁶

²¹ RV Sellers, *The Council of Chalcedon: A Historical and Doctrinal Survey*, SPCK., London, 1953, p. 30 in Wahba, op. cit., p. 9.

²² *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum (A.C.O.)*, edited by E Schwartz, Strassburg, Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1933, Tom. II, vol. I, p. 62 in Wahba, op. cit., p. 9.

²³ Metropolitan Methodios of Aksum, "Inter-Orthodox Theological Commission for the Dialogue with the Non-Chalcedonian Churches" in *Theological and Historical Studies: A Collection of Minor Works*, edited by Methodios Fouyas, Athens, 1985, p. 15; Fr. T.Y. Malaty, Christology, p. 10 in Wahba, op. cit., p. 9.

²⁴ *A.C.O.*, op. cit., p. 95 in Wahba, op. cit., p. 10.

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ Wahba, op. cit., p 10.

It was labeled the council of robbers by Leo Pope of Rome, as a council which ignored Rome's authority, robbing its claim of supremacy, was not for Leo a church council but a meeting of robbers! The Council of Chalcedon, without even examining the issue, denounced the Council of 449, putting the entire responsibility for its decrees exclusively on Pope Dioscorus. Only one hundred and four years later, the decision, not of Chalcedon, but of the so called *lactrocinium* (i.e. 'Robber Council') was justified. The Council of Constantinople in 553 anathematized Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus, and Ibas of Edessa, and condemned their *Three Chapters*.²⁷

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ANTIOCHIAN AND ALEXANDRIAN TRADITIONS

Pope Dioscorus, then, was not a heretic. The majority of the bishops who attended the Council of Chalcedon, as scholars indicate, believed that the traditional formula of faith "one incarnate nature of God the Word" was received from St Athanasius [and confirmed by St Cyril and the Council of Ephesus 431]. This belief is totally different from the Eutychian concept of the "single nature." The Alexandrian theology, as scholars confirm, was by no means docetic (*δοκέω*)²⁸ neither Apollinarian, as stated clearly.²⁹ It seems that the main problem of the Christological formula was the divergent interpretation of the issue between the Alexandrian and Antiochian theology. At Chalcedon, Pope Dioscorus refused to affirm the "in two natures" or "two natures exist" after the union but insisted upon the "one incarnate nature of God the Word" or to say "from two natures." Evidently the two conflicting traditions had not discovered an agreed theological standpoint between them.³⁰

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 11.

²⁸ From the Greek (*δοκέω*) meaning to think, suppose, imagine, expect, to seem, as opp. to reality (Liddel and Scott's, *op. cit.*, p.207-208); a tendency which considered the humanity and sufferings of Christ as apparent, rather than real (Wahba, *op. cit.*, p.12).

²⁹ Young, "A Reconsideration", p. 106, 114; "Christological Ideas in the Greek Commentaries on the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Journal Theological Studies*, new series 20, (1069), p. 153). in Wahba, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

³⁰ Samuel, *op. cit.*, pp. 55, 79; Young, "Christological Ideas", pp. 150-163 in Wahba, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

The point of the dispute between Dioscorus and the Council of Chalcedon, then, was this: was Chalcedon justified in ignoring the theological tradition built up by Alexandrian fathers like St Cyril on the strength of the council of 431 and sanctioning the Antiochian phrase 'two natures after the union' merely on the authority of Pope Leo of Rome [i.e. the *Tome of Leo*].³¹

The Church of Alexandria considered as central the Christological *mia physis* formula of St Cyril: "one nature of God the Word the Incarnate."³² The Cyrillian formula was accepted by the Council of Ephesus in 431. It was neither nullified by the Reunion of 433, nor condemned at Chalcedon. On the contrary, it continued to be considered an orthodox formula.³³

It is a fact that the phrase 'one incarnate nature of God the Word' has been defended by all the leaders of the non-Chalcedonian side. It is also clear that in so doing, they did not ignore the manhood of Christ. Pope Dioscorus, for instance, affirmed that Christ was one incarnate nature of God the Word, but he insisted at the same time that he was composed of Godhead and manhood, and that **in the one Christ the two natures continued without confusion or mixture on the one hand, and without division or separation on the other**. In other words, the one incarnate nature of God the Word was itself the result of the union of the two natures, which were irreducibly and indivisibly real in the one Christ. Therefore, the question of either nature being dismissed or ignored did not arise with reference to Pope Dioscorus.³⁴

CONTEMPORARY VIEW OF THE SITUATION ³⁵

The non-Chalcedonian side had wished to discard Nestorianism by confirming the doctrine of the one nature of God the Word incarnate, of

³¹ Samuel, op. cit., p.186.

³² J Lebon, *La Monophysisme Severien*, Louvain, 1909 for the dependence of the non-Chalcedonians on St Cyril in Wahba, op. cit., p. 12.

³³ Wahba, op. cit., pp.12-13.

³⁴ Samuel, op. cit., p.237.

³⁵ Metropolitan Bishoy, op. cit., p. 88.

two natures without intermixing or fusion or change. The expression ‘the one nature’ is the truest expression on ‘the natural union’ which St Cyril had taught in his *Third Letter to Nestorius*, and which was approved by both the Council of Ephesus and the Council of Chalcedon.

The Chalcedonian side wished to discard Eutychianism by confirming the doctrine and expression of the two natures, non-separated, or non-partitioned, in order to affirm the continuance of the existence of the two natures and that they were not annihilated in the union, and to affirm the non-annihilation of the distinction in the attributes of the two natures due to the union.

Perhaps each of the two sides was complementary to the other in its expression of the one truth. For those who professed one incarnate nature of two natures had added “without mixture or change” in order to refute Eutychianism. And those who professed two natures added “without separation or partition” in order to refute Nestorianism. Both sides spoke of one truth that the Lord Jesus Christ is one divine-human being, i.e. they spoke of one being of two essences united in the one Christ.

Those who used the expression ‘one incarnate nature’ had meant to express the *state of existence*; those who used the expression ‘two natures’ had meant to express the *reality of the continuance of the existence of the two natures*.

In other words, some have spoken about the *state* of existence, and some have spoken about the *reality* of the existence, and because they both used the same word ‘nature,’ they clashed.

Those who meant the ‘**state of existence**’ said “**one nature**,” and those who meant the ‘**reality of existence**’ said “**two natures**.” The proof is that both sides have together accepted that there can be no distinction between the two natures except in thought alone (Τῆ Ἐωρίᾳ μόνῃ). This means that there can be no actual distinction between them in reality, but rather in imagination and contemplation. This does not mean abolishing the reality of their existence, but abolishing the state of their existence not in union. Unity is the truest expression of the ‘natural union’ (ένωσις φυσική) *enosis physiki*.

THE TERM 'MONOPHYSITES': A MODERN SCHOLARY APPELLATION

In his book *The Council of Chalcedon Re-examined*, VC Samuel quotes from WHC Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, Cambridge, 1972, "that the term 'monophysite' is a modern one, and that he uses it for the sake of convenience."³⁶

Since the Council of Chalcedon in 451, Chalcedonians have tried to make out that the rejection of the Council of Chalcedon and the *Tome of Leo* with the phrase 'in two natures' by the non-Chalcedon side was the result of their adherence to the Monophysite heresy, and the west has considered their defense of the phrase 'one incarnate nature' as sufficient basis for characterizing them all along as Monophysite.³⁷

'Eutychianism' or 'Monophysitism' is a distorted vision of the Alexandrian Christology. It should be stressed at the same time that neither St Cyril of Alexandria nor any of the recognized theologians and Church Fathers of the non-Chalcedonian side including St Dioscorus of Alexandria has ever been guilty of asserting it.³⁸

Although the term 'monophysite' had not come to the knowledge of 6th century non-Chalcedonian theologians as having been applied to their theological tradition, St Severus had forestalled the possibility of its application to his section of the Church. This he does by reproducing time and again two passages from the writings of St Cyril of Alexandria. One of them as follows:

While affirming that the nature of the Word is one, had we satisfied ourselves by saying only that, without adding the 'incarnate' thereby keeping the dispensation as something unimportant, they would probably have had a basis, not without justification, to raise the question concerning the perfection of the manhood or how the fullness of the humanity and the signification of our ousia have been

³⁶ Samuel, op. cit., p. xxi, 22f.

³⁷ *ibid*, p.236.

³⁸ *ibid*, p.293.

*conserved? Since we have confessed the Word 'incarnate,' let them put away the cudgel, which they have raised against us.*³⁹

The phrase 'one nature' (μία φύσις), then is not to be used with reference to Christ without the 'incarnate.'⁴⁰ Therefore, the 'one' in the phrase is not a simple one; it is the one which includes the fullness of Godhead and manhood. Jesus Christ is not a 'single nature', but He is one 'composite nature.' See *Hypostatic Union*, p. 71.

This idea is stated in unmistakable terms by St Cyril, whom St Severus quotes again and again: "*It is not merely with reference to those that are simple by nature that the word 'one' is employed, but it is used also with reference to those that have come into being in composition, for which man is a good example.*" The term 'one' in the 'one incarnate nature of God the Word' cannot legitimately be rendered as the *monos* of the *Monophysites*.⁴¹

ST CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA'S MIAPHYSIS

What then is the correct meaning of the formula of our common Father St Cyril, the Pillar of Faith? It is "*One incarnate nature of God the Logos (Word) – μία φύσις τοῦ Θεοῦ λογοῦ σεσαρκωμένη.*"

St Cyril writes in his letter to Succensus, Letter 46, paragraphs 6 and 7:

Those who pervert what is right" have not known that there is in truth one incarnate nature of the Word. For if there is one Son, who by nature and in truth is the Word of God the Father, the ineffably begotten of Him, who then according to an assumption of flesh, not without a soul but endowed with a rational soul, came forth a man from a woman, he shall not be for this reason divided into two persons and two sons but he has remained one, yet not without flesh nor outside union. He who says this does not in any way or in any manner signify confusion, or a blending, or anything else of such a kind, nor indeed will this follow as it from some

³⁹ *Contra Grammaticum*, II, pp. 110f in Samuel, op. cit., p. 242.

⁴⁰ See St Cyril's letter to Succensus, Letter 46, quoted on p. 226 of this chapter.

⁴¹ Samuel, op. cit., p. 243.

necessary reasoning or other. For even if it is stated by us that the Only-Begotten Son of God is one, incarnate and made man, He is not mixed together because of this, as it seems to them. The nature of the Word has not passed over into the nature of the flesh. Neither has the nature of the flesh passed over into the nature of the Word, but remaining and being considered in the propriety (ἰδιότης) according to the nature of each ineffably and inexplicably united, in accordance with the reasoning just given by us, this has shown forth for us the one physis of the Son; but as I said, incarnate.

For not only in the case of those which are simple by nature is the term 'one' truly used, but also in respect to what has been brought together according to a synthesis, as man is one being, who is of soul and body. For soul and body are of different species and are not consubstantial to each other, but when united they produce one physis (φύσις) of man, even though in considerations of the synthesis the difference exists according to the nature of those which have been brought together into unity. Accordingly they are speaking in vain who say that, if there should be one incarnate physis of the Word, in every way and in every manner it would follow that a mixture and a confusion occurred as if lessening and taking away the nature of man. For neither has it been lessened, nor is it taken away, as the question says. For to say that He has been made flesh is sufficient for the most complete statement of His becoming man. For if there had been silence about this on part there would have been some room for their calumny. But since the statement that He was made flesh has been necessarily adduced, where is there a way of lessening or subtraction? ⁴²

⁴² McEnerney, op. cit., pp.200-201.

**EFFORTS IN BRIDGING THE GAP
DURING THE PAPACY OF POPE SHENOUDA III
BY THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH AFTER CHALCEDON**

DIALOGUES WITH THE CHALCEDONIAN CHURCHES

- ❖ In 1964, during the papacy of H.H Pope Cyril VI, a fresh dialogue began between the Chalcedonian and non Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches at Aarhus in Denmark. This was followed by meetings at Bristol in 1967, Geneva in 1970 and Addis Ababa in 1971. These were a series of non-official consultations which served as steps towards mutual understanding.
- ❖ The official consultation in which concrete steps were taken began in 1985 at Chambesy in Geneva. The second official consultation was held at the monastery of Saint Bishoy in Wadi-El-Natroun, in Egypt in June 1989. The outcome of this latter meeting was of historical dimensions, since in this meeting the two families of Orthodoxy were able to agree on a Christological formula, thus ending the controversy regarding Christology which has lasted more than fifteen centuries (see below).
- ❖ The Chalcedon and non-Chalcedonian sides in the Orthodox dialogue at St Bishoy's Monastery in Egypt in June 1989 reached an agreement. Both sides accepted the theological phraseology of the other, professing its orthodoxy. Both sides agreed that the Word of God, Himself, became perfect man, through incarnation, is co-essential to the Father according to His divinity, and co-essential to us according to His humanity – without sin. Also, that the union of natures in Christ is a natural, hypostatic, real and perfect union without fusion or intermixing or change or separation. That it is not possible to distinguish between the natures except in thought alone. That the Virgin Mary is 'Theotokos' (Θεοτόκος) with **anathematizing the teachings of both Nestorius and Eutyches and also the crypto-Nestorianism of Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus.**⁴³

⁴³ Metropolitan Bishoy, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.

- ❖ In September 1990, the two families of Orthodoxy signed an agreement on Christology, and recommendations were presented to the different Orthodox Churches, to lift the anathemas and enmity of the past, after revising the results of the dialogues. If both agreements are accepted by the various Orthodox Churches, the restoration of communion will be very easy at all levels, even as far as sharing one table in the Eucharist.⁴⁴

WITH THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

- ❖ In May 1978, H.H. Pope Shenouda III of Alexandria visited Pope Paul VI of Rome.⁴⁵ They signed a Common Declaration saying: *“We confess that our Lord and God and Savior and King of us all, Jesus Christ, is perfect God with respect to His divinity, perfect man with respect to His humanity. In Him His divinity is united with His humanity in a real, perfect union without mingling, without commixtion, without confusion, without alteration, without division, without separation.”*⁴⁶
- ❖ At the Monastery of Saint Bishoy, February 12th, 1988 the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church signed an Agreed Statement on Christology: *“We believe that our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ, the Incarnate—Logos is perfect in His divinity and perfect in His humanity. He made His humanity One with His divinity without Mixture, nor Mingling, nor Confusion. His divinity was not separated from His humanity even for a moment or a twinkling of an eye. At the same time, we anathematize the doctrines of both Nestorius and Eutyches.”*

WITH THE REFORMED CHURCHES IN THE NETHERLANDS

- ❖ On September 13, 1994 the Oriental Orthodox signed an ‘Agreed Statement on Christology’ with the Reformed Churches in the

⁴⁴ Wahba, op. cit., p.15

⁴⁵ Commemorating 16 centuries of the departure of St Athanasius the Apostolic. On this occasion, Pope Paul VI gave Pope Shenouda III the relics of St Athanasius.

⁴⁶ *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 65 (1973), p. 300; also Pope Shenouda III, *The Nature of Christ*, Cairo, 1985 in Wahba, op. cit., p. 5.

Netherlands. Quoted are selected parts of the agreement stating that, *“We confess our Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God, perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, consisting of a rational soul and a body, begotten of the Father before the ages according to His divinity, the Same, in the fullness of time, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, according to His humanity; the Same co-essential with the Father according to His divinity and co-essential with us according to His humanity. For a union has been made of two natures. For this cause we confess one Christ, one Son, one Lord. 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 human and from the very conception united to Himself the temple taken from her.”* Also, *“Both sides 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. 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.”*⁴⁷

WITH THE ANGLICAN CHURCH

- ❖ At the Anglican-Oriental Orthodox International Commission, Holy Etchmiadzin, Armenia, November 19, 2002, the Oriental Orthodox Churches in their ‘Agreed Statement on Christology’ with the Anglican Church states:

“Both sides 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 thereby denying that the person of Jesus Christ is a single person of God the

⁴⁷ *Al-Qararrat Al-Magm 'eya fee 'Aahd Qadasat Al-Baba Shenouda Al-Thaleth* (Synodal Decisions in the Era of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III), (Arabic), Secretariat of the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church, Cairo, 2001, pp.202, 203.

*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."*⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Metropolitan Bishoy, op. cit., p.123.

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