

# Christology

Agreed Statement

by the

Anglican-Oriental Orthodox International Commission

Holy Etchmiadzin, Armenia

5–10 November 2002

Revised

Cairo, Egypt

13–17 October 2014

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, 13 September 1994).

Our first meeting as the Anglican-Oriental Orthodox International Commission was held in Holy Etchmiadzin, Armenia, 5–10 November 2002, following the meeting of the Preparatory Committee in Midhurst, England, 27–30 July 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, 3–7 October 2013. The third meeting of the Commission, held in Cairo, Egypt, 13–17 October 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 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.\*

\*This Introduction is a part of and signed with the Agreed 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 Reunion, 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, (τῇ θεωρίᾳ μόνῃ τῆ theôria monê) 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 Reunion, AD 433.]
  
- 4 Concerning the four adverbs used to qualify the mystery of the hypostatic union: ‘without commingling’ (or confusion) (ἀσυγχύτως asyngchytôs), ‘without change’ (ἀτρέπτως atreptôs), ‘without separation’ (ἀχωρίστως aclôristôs), and ‘without division’ (ἀδιαιρέτως adihairetôs), 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). 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.' 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 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), and 'In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself' (2

Corinthians 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

His Eminence Metropolitan Bishoy  
Oriental Orthodox Co-Chairman

*Signed in Cairo, 15 October 2014*

## Members of the Commission at the 2002 meeting

### **Anglican**

The Rt Revd Dr Geoffrey Rowell (Co-Chair)

The Church of England

The Rt Revd John Baycroft

The Anglican Communion Office (Co-Secretary)

The Rt Revd Duleep de Chickera

The Church of Ceylon

The Rt Revd Michael Jackson

The Church of Ireland

The Most Revd Clive Handford

The Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East

The Revd Canon Harold J Nahabedian

The Anglican Church of Canada

The Revd Canon Jonathan Gough

The Archbishop of Canterbury's Representative

The Revd William Taylor

The Church of England

Mrs C Codner

Secretary

### **Oriental Orthodox**

Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria

His Eminence Metropolitan Bishop of Damietta (Co-Chair)

His Grace Bishop Angaelos

Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church –

Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, Armenia

His Grace Bishop Yeznik Petrossian

Archbishop Arsen Berberian (Observer)

Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church –

Holy See of Cilicia, Antelias – Lebanon

His Grace Bishop Nareg Alemezian (Co-Secretary)

His Grace Bishop Mikael Ajapahyan

Bishop Kegham Khatcherian

Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church

His Grace Bishop Geevarghese Mar Coorilos

Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch

His Eminence Metropolitan Mor Eustathius Matta Roham



## Members of the Commission 2013 and 2014

### Anglican

The Rt Revd Dr Geoffrey Rowell (Co-Chair)	2013–14
The Church of England	
The Rt Revd Dr Gregory Cameron	2014
The Church in Wales (Unable to attend the meeting)	
The Revd Christopher Edgar	2014
The Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East	
The Most Revd Dr Michael Jackson	2013–14
The Church of Ireland	
The Rt Revd Duleep de Chickera	2013
The Church of Ceylon	
The Revd Canon Dr William Taylor	2013–14
The Church of England	
The Rt Revd Clive Handford	2013
The Church of England (Unable to attend the meeting)	
The Very Revd Dr Samy Shehata	2013–14
The Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East	
The Revd Canon Harold Nahabedian	2013
The Anglican Church of Canada	
The Ven. Edward Simonton OGS	2014
The Anglican Church of Canada	
The Revd Stephen Stavrou	2014
The Church of England (Unable to attend the meeting)	
The Revd Dr Patrick Thomas	2014
The Church in Wales	
The Rt Revd Jonathan Goodall	2013
The Church of England	
The Revd Canon Alyson Barnett-Cowan	2013–14
Anglican Communion Office (Co-Secretary)	
The Revd Neil Vigers	2013–14
Anglican Communion Office (Administrator)	

## Members of the Commission 2013 and 2014

### **Oriental Orthodox**

#### Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria

His Eminence Metropolitan Bishoy 2013–14

(Co-Chair) Egypt (Unable to attend the 2013 meeting)

His Grace Bishop Angaelos 2013–14

England (Acting Co-Secretary 2013)

#### Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church –

##### Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, Armenia

His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian 2013–14

USA (Unable to attend the 2014 meeting)

The Very Revd Archimandrite Shahe Ananyan 2013-14

Armenia (Unable to attend the 2014 meeting)

The Very Revd Fr Gabriel Sargsyan 2014

#### Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church –

##### Holy See of Cilicia, Antelias – Lebanon

His Eminence Archbishop Nareg Alemezian 2013–14

Cyprus (Co-Secretary 2013)

His Grace Bishop Shahe Panossian 2013

Kuwait

The Very Revd Fr Housig Mardirossian 2014

Lebanon (Co-Secretary 2014)

#### Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church

His Grace Archbishop Abba Gabriel 2013–14

Ethiopia (Unable to attend the 2014 meeting)

His Grace Archbishop Abba Yacob 2013–14

South Africa (Unable to attend the 2014 meeting)

#### Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church

Metropolitan Geevarghese Mor Coorilos 2014

India

The Revd Fr Dr KM George 2013–14  
India (Unable to attend the 2013 meeting)

Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch

His Eminence Archbishop Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim 2013

USA

His Eminence Archbishop Mor Gregorios Joseph 2013

India (Unable to attend the meeting)

His Eminence Mor Eustatheus Matta Roham 2014

Syria (Unable to attend the meeting)

The Very Revd Fr Roger Akhrass 2014

Syria