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Centro Pro Unione
"Ut Omnes Unum Sint"

OC - O

MIXED OLD CATHOLIC - ORTHODOX COMMISSION

CHRISTOLOGY

Agreed Statement, Chambésy 1975 and 1977

II/I   THE INCARNATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

(I)   I. We believe in Jesus Christ, the only Son and the only Word of God 'who for us human beings and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and became a human being' (Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed). In the incarnation the eternal and timeless God entered time and history as a human being 'in order to unite the human race once again in himself as its head' (Cyril of Alexandria, PG 76, 17).

> Jesus Christ has two natures: he is perfect God who has everything the Father has, except his unbegottenness; but at the same time he is also perfectly human 'with a rational soul and body', like us in every respect except our sin.
> As human being Jesus Christ stands out from all other human beings by his supernatural birth and sinlessness, since his incarnation took place through the Holy Spirit and from the Virgin Mary, and he was also free from original sin and from all personal sin.

(2)   2. Concerning the two natures of Christ, the divine and the human, we confess what the Church teaches on the basis of Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition: namely, that the two natures, the divine and the human, have been hypostatically united in Christ, and this indeed in the hypostasis or person of God the Word, 'without confusion without change, without division, without separation' (4th Ecumenical Council).

(3)   Jesus Christ is God-man, .the one divine person in two natures, the divine and the human, with two wills and two operations (*energeiai*). But since the person of Jesus Christ unites the two natures and it is this person which wills and operates accordingly, we can therefore call the operations of the Lord divine-human. 'He does what the human being does not just in a human manner, for he is not only human but also divine; and he does what God does not just in a divine manner, for he is not only divine but also human' (John of Damascus, PG 94, 1060). Through the 'mutual interpenetration' or 'mutual indwelling' of the two natures, not only is the duality of the natures, wills and operations preserved but also the unity of the person.

(4)   3. The hypostatic union has certain consequences for the dogma of the Holy Trinity:

a)   Although the whole divine nature was united with the human nature in Jesus Christ, the whole Holy Trinity did not become incarnate but only the second person of the Trinity.

b)   The incarnation does not bring about any alteration or change in the unalterable and unchangeable God.

(5)   4. The hypostatic union results in:

a)   The exchange or mutual communication of the properties. In the hypostatic union, the two natures, the divine and the human, communicate to each other their properties, by penetrating each other and indwelling in each other.

b)   The divinisation (*theosis*) of the human nature of Christ. It abides, of course, 'within the limits proper to it and within its kind' (6th Ecumenical Council).

c)   The sinlessness of Christ.

d)   The worship of Christ even in respect of his human nature. We owe worship to the divine-human person of the Lord.

e)   The Virgin Mary is truly God-bearer and Mother of God.

(6)   5. The incarnation of the eternal Word of God, which took place out of love for humanity, is an inaccessible and inconceivable mystery, to be appropriated in faith . . .

In the view of the Mixed Orthodox-Old Catholic Commission, the above text on 'The Incarnation of the Word of God' represents the doctrine of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.

(7)   Concerning the hypostatic union of the two natures, the teaching of the Church is:

I.   The divine nature was united with the human nature hypostatically, i.e., in the hypostasis or person of God the Word. In his incarnation he assumed not human nature in general, but an individual human nature. This did not exist previously; it was 'without hypostasis of its own nor did it have any prior individuality ...but the Word of God itself became hypostasis to the flesh' (John of Damascus, PG 94 1024. 985). Consequently, the Lord did not assume a human hypostasis but a human nature, and this indeed is human nature in its entirety. The individual human nature assumed was a true and complete one 'with rational soul and body' (4th Ecumenical Council). It did not exist previously in an individual independent of the one person of Jesus Christ, nor had it previously been created, but its existence began in the moment of the divine incarnation 'of the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary', in the unity of the person or hypostasis of the Word of God. It therefore never had any other hypostasis than that only of the Son of God.

(8)   2. Jesus Christ is therefore the one person 'in two natures', the divine and the human, but not 'from two natures'. The 4th Ecumenical Council teaches us to confess ' ... one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistance (hypostasis). The hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ, which took place 'in the moment of the conception, without confusion or separation', remains forever indivisible and indissoluble. The human nature remains forever inseparably united with the divine nature. The God-man is therefore 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today and forever' (Heb. 13:8).

(9)   3. Since there are two natures, the divine and the human, in Jesus Christ, there are also in him two freely operating wills, appertaining to the natures, the divine and the human; two operations (*energeiai*) appertaining to the natures, the divine and the human, as well as two free wills (*autexousia*) appertaining to the natures, the divine and the human; the wisdom and the knowledge, too, are both divine and human. Because the Lord is equal in nature to God the Father, he wills and operates in freedom as God; because he is also equal in nature to us human beings, he wills and operates in freedom also as a human being. 'Willing and operating' he possesses of course 'not divided but united; he wills and works in each of the two natures, of course, in communion with the other'. We therefore understand the two wills not as contrary or as striving against each other, but each as willing in harmony the same thing each according to its own mode. Certainly the weak human will follows the strong divine will and subordinates itself to that will, for both wills and operations 'acted in unity' and 'cooperated for the salvation of the human race' (6th Ecumenical Council). Put in general terms: 'Since the hypostasis of Christ is one and Christ is one, he is one who wills in accordance with both natures: as God on the basis of good pleasure, as human being in obedience' (John of Damascus, PG 95, 160).

(10)   The Church teaches therefore what the fathers of the 6th Ecumenical Council also defined: 'We adhere firmly in every way to the "without confusion" and "without division" and proclaim in short: Since we believe that one of the Holy Trinity, after the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, is our true God, we affirm that his two natures are shown in his one hypostasis ... The distinction of natures in the one hypostasis is seen in the fact that each nature wills and operates what is its own in communion with the other. Accordingly, we also praise the wills and operations appertaining to the two natures, which cooperate for the salvation of the human race.' Even after the union 'his divinized human will was not annihilated but continued all the stronger'.

In the view of the Joint Orthodox-Old Catholic Theological Commission the above text on 'The Hypostatic Union' reproduces the doctrine of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.

Chambésy, Geneva, Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate August 20-28, 1975
Signatures of all members of the Joint Commission present.

11/3 THE MOTHER OF GOD

(11)   The Church believes that the divine and human natures are hypostatically united in Jesus Christ. It accordingly believes also that the Blessed Virgin Mary gave birth not to a human being merely but to the God-man (the divine-human being) Jesus Christ and that she is therefore truly Mother of God as the 3rd Ecumenical Council defined and the 5th Ecumenical Council confirmed. According to St. John of Damascus, the name 'Mother of God' 'embraces the whole mystery of the divine dispensation' (i.e., plan of salvation) (*de fide orth.* 3.12. PG 94, 1029).

(12)   1. In the Virgin Mary, the Son of God assumed human nature in its entirety, body and soul, in virtue of the divine omnipotence, for the power of the Most High overshadowed her and the Holy Spirit came upon her (Luke 1:35). In this way the Word was made flesh (John 1:14). By the true and real motherhood of the Virgin

Mary, the Redeemer was united with the human race.

(13)   There is an intrinsic connection between the truth of the one Christ and the truth of the divine motherhood of Mary. ' for a union of two natures took place; therefore we confess one Christ, one Son, one Lord. According to this understanding of the unconfused union, we confess the Holy Virgin to be *'theotokos'* because God the Word was made flesh and lived as a human being and from the very conception united to himself the temple taken from her' (3rd Ecumenical Council, Formula of Union, Mansi 5.592).' we teach with one voice that the Son (of God) and our Lord, Jesus Christ, is to be confessed as one and the same person ... begotten of his Father before the worlds according to his Godhead but in these last days born for us and for our salvation of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to his humanity' (4th Ecumenical Council, Definition of Faith, Mansi 7.116).

(14)   2. Venerating the Virgin Mary as Mother of God, whose pregnancy is called by St. Ignatius of Antioch 'a mystery to be cried aloud' (ad Eph. 19:1), the Church also glorifies her perpetual virginity. The Mother of God is ever-Virgin, since, while remaining a maiden, she bore Christ in an ineffable and inexplicable manner. In their address to the Emperor Marcian, the fathers of the 4th Ecumenical Council declared: ' the fathers . . . have expounded the meaning of faith for all and proclaimed accurately the blessing of the incarnation: how the mystery of the plan of salvation was prepared from on high and from the maternal womb, how the Virgin was named Mother of God for the sake of him who granted her virginity even after her pregnancy and kept her body sealed in a glorious manner, and how she is truly called Mother because of the flesh of the Lord of all things, which came from her and which she gave to him' (Allocutio ad Marc. Im p. Mansi 7.461B). And in its decision the 7th Ecumenical Council declared: 'We confess that he who was incarnate of the immaculate Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary has two natures' (Definitio, Mansi 13.377A). As St. Augustine says: 'He was born of the Ho- ly Spirit and the Virgin Mary. And even the birth as human being is itself lowly and lofty . Why lowly? Because as human being he is born of a human being. Why lofty? Because he was born of a virgin. A virgin conceived, a virgin gave birth, and after the birth she remained a virgin' (de symb. ad cat. 1.3, 6. PL 40.630). (Cf. also St. Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, General Epistle, PG 87.3164, 3176, Mansi 9.476, 485; St. John of Damascus, de fid. orth. 4,14. PG 94. 1161; St. Maximus the Confessor, ambig. PG 91, 1276A etc .).

(15)   3. Accordingly the Church venerates in a very special way the Virgin Mother of God, though 'not as divine but as Mother of God according to the flesh' (St. John of Damascus, de imag. 2,5. PG 94,1357). If, because of the redemption in Christ and its blessings, the Church glorifies God above all and offers him the worship of true adoration due to the divine nature alone, at the same time it venerates the Mother of God as chosen vessel of the work of salvation, as she who accepted the word of God in faith, humility and obedience, as gateway through which God entered the world . It calls her the Blessed One, the first of the saints and the pure handmaid of the Lord, and thereby ascribes to her a relative sinlessness by grace, from the time the Holy Spirit descended upon her, for our Saviour Jesus Christ alone is sinless by nature and absolutely.

(16)   The Church does not recognize the recent dogmas of an immaculate conception and bodily assumption of the Mother of God. But it celebrates the entry of the Mother of God into eternal life and solemnly observes the festival of her dormition.

(17)   4. The Church venerates the Mother of God also in her role as intercessor for human beings before God, which is hers in particular because of her outstanding place in the work of salvation. But it distinguishes between the intercession of the Mother of God and the quite unique mediatorship of Jesus Christ: 'For there is one mediator between God and humanity–the man Jesus Christ' (1 Tim. 2:5). 'O Merciful One, show your love to humankind; accept the Mother of God who bore you, who intercedes for us, and save your helpless people, 0 our Saviour' (Saturday Vespers, Tone 8, Theotokion). ' . . .0 God ... grant us all to share the life of your Son in fellowship with the Virgin Mary, the Blessed Mother of our Lord and God . . . and of all your saints. Look upon their life and death and answer their intercessions for your Church on earth' (Divine Liturgy of the Old Catholic Church of Switzerland).

(18)   Although the Mother of God is also called 'mediatrix' (*mesitria*) in the hymns of the Church, this is never anywhere in the sense of co-mediatrix or co-redemptrix but only in the sense of intercessor.

In the view of the Joint Orthodox-Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on the 'Mother of God' reproduces the doctrine of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.

Chambésy, Geneva, Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, August 23-30, 1977.

Signatures of all members of the Joint Commission present.

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[Meyer, H. and L. Vischer, Edd. *Growth in Agreement. Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level*. (NY/Geneva: Paulist Press/World Council of Churches, 1984) 396-401]