

COMMON DECLARATION

**Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St Mark
and Robert A.K. Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury**

Egypt, 1 October 1987

Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St Mark, and Robert Archbishop of Canterbury and President of the Anglican Consultative Council, give thanks to God in the Holy Spirit for our meeting in Egypt both in Cairo and at the Monastery of St Bishoi in the Wadi El Natroun for common prayer and conversation to further closer relations between the churches of the Anglican Communion and the Coptic Orthodox Church in accordance with the prayer of our Lord for the unity of all his disciples (John 17:21).

Our desire for mutual understanding and closer cooperation has for its foundation the basic conviction that in spite of many centuries of isolation from each other and the separate development of our two traditions, we nevertheless still share an essentially common faith.

The heart of this faith is to be found in the Christian profession of faith in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible: and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made: who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father, and he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead: whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke through the prophets; and in one holy, catholic and apostolic church: acknowledging one baptism for the remission of sins, and looking for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come, Amen.

This is the faith of the church. This is our faith: belief in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit which Anglicans and Coptic Orthodox confess in the early three ecumenical creeds.

In spite of past misunderstandings Anglicans and Coptic Orthodox also confess together their faith that our Lord and God, the Saviour and Sovereign of all, Jesus Christ, is perfect in his divinity and perfect in his humanity. In him his divinity is united with his humanity in a real perfect union without mingling or commixture, without confusion or change, without division or separation, his divinity did not separate from his humanity for an instant, he who is God eternal and invisible became visible in the flesh, and took upon himself the form of a servant. In him are preserved all the properties of the divinity and all the properties of the humanity, together in a real, perfect, indivisible and inseparable union.

Though Anglicans and Coptic Orthodox recognize with humility the theological differences which have sadly separated Christians since 451, they also now recognize that some divisions had cultural and political origins rather than real differences in faith. Nevertheless, as a result of their separate histories, Anglicans and Coptic Orthodox need to examine their differences to overcome difficulties and misunderstandings; for example regarding the sacrament of holy baptism. The recently established Anglican-Oriental Orthodox pastoral forum has proposed a future theological forum which should provide a place for this discussion so that existing difficulties over the doctrine and practice of holy baptism may be overcome, together with any other perceived differences of faith or sacramental life which would prevent closer relations and ultimate communion between our two churches.

Pope Shenouda III and Archbishop Robert also express deep thankfulness for the good relations which are now well established between the local Anglican diocese in Egypt, and its bishop, the Right Rev. Ghais Malik, and the Coptic Orthodox Church. These same good relations characterize Anglican-Coptic cooperation in other regions, principally Western Europe, North America and Australia. We call on the two churches to continue to give each other

brotherly mutual support and help. We recognize the great significance of the Coptic Church in the wider context of Christianity in the Middle East. Christians throughout - the world have the duty to support their Christian brothers and sisters in the original homelands of the Christian church.

Above all we call upon the faithful of the Anglican Communion and the Coptic Orthodox Church to pray for each other as fellow members of the house hold of faith. This will be the true basis for the increased theological understanding, consultation and social collaboration which should characterize the relations between the two churches. In conclusion we commend the sacred cause of the unity of Christians to the prayers of all the saints, and especially to St Mark the Evangelist, St Clement of Alexandria, St Athanasius, St Cyril, St Anthony of Egypt, St Bishoi, and above all to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Theotokos , in whose company and fellowship we are supported in the communion of saints.

May God, the Giver of all good gifts, answer our prayers for unity through Jesus Christ our Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit.