PREFACE

In 1989 a joint ecumenical conference of theologians representing churches of the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox[1] communions, signed the "Agreed Statement" at Wadi el-Natrun, outside Cairo. This historic event represented fifteen years of fruitful ecumenical relations between the two separated families of the Christian East. Perhaps the most significant result of the Agreement was the recognition that Christ's incarnate humanity and divinity in the hypostatic union could be expressed validly through the "two natures" formulation of the Council of Chalcedon (451) and the Alexandrine or Cyrillian school's received "single nature" model. This event also anticipated the hope of a similar declaration by the supreme hierarchs of the respective Orthodox churches on behalf of their synods, clergy and faithful that could lead to eventual communion of the two bodies. However, since the end of the official (plenary) inter-Orthodox dialogues in the 1990s, most Orthodox jurisdictions have neither formally nor explicitly acknowledged the results of the ecumenical rapprochement, nor its implications for the Church; a few have affirmed portions of it and others

[1] The terms *Eastern Orthodox* and *Oriental Orthodox* used throughout this work are generally accepted designations for these churches in ecumenical venues. Eastern Orthodox refers to the Church of Constantinople (Byzantium) and other churches historically within its communion. These include the ancient autocephalous ("self-heading") churches of Antioch, Jerusalem, Georgia and Cyprus, the later-developing autocephalous churches of Russia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Poland, Albania, the Czech Lands and Slovakia, Mount Sinai, Finland, and the Orthodox Church of America. (The autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of America and the autonomy of the churches of Estonia, Japan, China and Ukraine remain in dispute among various canonical Eastern Orthodox bodies.) Oriental Orthodox includes the ancient autocephalous churches of Alexandria (Coptic) and Antioch (Syriac), the Armenian Apostolic Church (consisting of two autocephalous churches), as well as the Malankara Church of India (comprising an autocephalous church and an autonomous church dependent on Antioch), and the autocephalous Ethiopian ("Tewahedo") and Eritrean churches.

have even condemned it. This situation reveals one of numerous, complex issues which remain today in inter-Orthodox relations, and the multiple steps still needed to establish communion between the two bodies. It forms one of the numerous and significant challenges for contemporary inter-Orthodox ecumenical relations, and one of the key areas of investigation in this work.

Chapters one and two present the *Sitz im Leben* of the early Conciliar period of the Church in the East, including numerous aspects of the social and civic history which is inextricably bound with it; the forces and movements leading to the convocation of the Council of Chalcedon; the divisions following it, and abortive attempts to re-establish communion before the Arab conquest. Chapter Three projects forward to the twentieth century, providing an account of how various Orthodox bodies came to accept and participate in the "ecumenical movement," and particularly the inter-Orthodox "unofficial" consultations held between 1964 and 1971 and the four "official" dialogues held between 1985–1993. Chapter four and the Conclusion provide an account of developments at the turn of the third millennium, an analysis of successes and losses in the rapprochement, and finally, my recommendations for reengaging the inter-Orthodox ecumenical process, which has lost a certain momentum in very recent years.

As a matter of theological investigation, the unfolding work of understanding between the Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Orthodox Churches is among the most remarkable endeavors in modern ecumenism. It also bears the greatest promise for what might eventually result in the institutional integration of the two Orthodox families. This marvelous endeavor, despite many setbacks, is strengthening the bonds of faith between those who, until relatively recently, had little or no contact with one another at the level of rapprochement. It is a gift to Christians in general, showing us all that the churches and their faithful, without force or contrivance, can "break down the walls of divisions and distrust [and] overcome obstacles and prejudices which thwart the proclamation of the Gospel of salvation in the Cross of Jesus."[2] Such an undertaking has also borne fruit in ecumenical dialogue outside of Orthodoxy. Writing as an Eastern Catholic, I especially note the historic ecumenical work of my own communion with Oriental Orthodoxy, resulting in the joint Christological declarations between Pope Paul VI and Syriac Patriarch Mar Ignatios Iacob

[2] John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ut Unum Sint*, Vatican Translation, (May 25, 1995), 2.

III of Antioch (1971) and Coptic Pope Shenouda III of Alexandria (1973). These concords, while directly attributable especially to the first (1971) *Pro Oriente* consultation in Vienna, are also grounded in the inter-Orthodox dialogue. "No doubt the lecturers and in general the participants of the [first Vienna] Consultation had in mind and in remembrance the positive results of the unofficial discussions between the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox theologians."[3]

I have provided this book primarily as an introductory work variously for students of ecclesiology, conciliar-era church history, and ecumenical relations. I particularly hope that it will be useful to students in programs of ministerial or catechetical formation. In presenting this work, it is also my desire to make the exceptional efforts of the inter-Orthodox dialogue partners better known and recognized, especially given the still-too frequent ascriptions of *monophysitism* (especially among Western commentators) to the Oriental Orthodox churches and their Church Fathers.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to numerous Orthodox hierarchs, clergy, monastics and lay faithful—both Eastern and Oriental—and to academic institutions connected with them in the United States, Switzerland, Syria, Lebanon and India who gave generously of their time and cooperation. In particular, I also wish to thank: the faculty and staff of the University of Balamand, Lebanon and the staff of the library and archives of the World Council of Churches; Dr. Gary Vachicouras (Geneva), Mme. Mouna Malek (Damascus) and Dr. Christine Chaillot (Paris); V. Rev. Nicolas Porter and Evelyne Roemer of Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Geneva; and the V. Rev. K. M. George of the Indian Orthodox Seminary in Kottayam, Kerala (India) who reviewed this work and made valuable comments on it prior to publication; to Kevin Symonds and Tammy-Jo Brenzo for their generous technical advice and assistance in formatting the manuscript. My editor, Dr. Katie Stott, deserves particular mention for her outstanding guidance and encouragement.

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[3] Bishop Mesorob K. Krikorian, "The Theological Significance of the Results of the Vienna Consultations," *The Vienna Dialogue: Five Pro Oriente Consultations with Oriental Orthodoxy, Communiqués and Common Declarations*, Booklet One, 11.

This work is dedicated to my former professor and *Doktorvater*, Rev. Dr. Michael A. Fahey, S.J., of Boston College.

October 28, 2008
Feast of the holy martyr,
Parascheva of Iconium