

**Université de Genève**  
**Faculté autonome de théologie protestante**  
**Institut œcuménique de Bossey**

**Diversity and Uniformity in the Quest for Christian Unity:  
A Study of the Relationship between the Maronite Church  
and the Holy See for a Possible Contribution to the  
Ecumenical Movement**

by/par Sr. Dominga Khalil Khalil

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Supervisors:

Prof. Dr. Enrico Norelli

Prof. Fr. Dr. Lawrence Iwuamadi

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*Congrégation des Sœurs Maronites de Sainte Thérèse de l'Enfant Jésus- Liban*

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## **Abstract**

Christ prayed that the Church be one “*so that the world may believe*” (John 17:21). The background of this thesis therefore is the wish to contribute to the efforts being made to realize this prayer of Christ. Our main concern is to find possible ways to address the challenges of diversity and uniformity to move forward in the search of Christian unity. In this context, the study of the Maronite-Holy See relationship reveals some possible ecumenical directions for the future: seeking unity does not mean to be uniform; setting limits to diversity is necessary to achieve unity; strengthening reception and openness to spiritual ecumenism pave the way for visible unity. Our contention is that the quest for unity could be improved in the future if these points get bigger reinforcement within the ecumenical movement.

## Introduction

### 1. Research Background

“*That they may all be one.*” (John 17:21)<sup>1</sup> The lord Jesus Christ prayed that His followers may be united. In that prayer, Christ expressed His will for the Church to be one in order that the world may believe. Regrettably separations are not only seen between nations and human beings but also in the Body of Christ. These divisions leave the Church bleeding and raise the question of how we can help in bringing about healing. They raise the question of how Christians can witness to the world that they are the disciples of Christ. In this way, the pursuit of visible unity becomes an imperative and a duty.

Notwithstanding what the ecumenical movement has done and continues to do Churches remain unfortunately separated. “Such division openly contradicts the will of Christ... and damages the holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature.”<sup>2</sup> The background of this research therefore is the wish to contribute to the efforts being made to realize the prayer of Christ “that they may all be one.” This involves exploring options that until now appear to be untapped. It involves looking at other possibilities for promoting reconciliation, communion and unity.

### 2. Statement of the Problem

Since the inception of the modern ecumenical movement in 1910,<sup>3</sup> many determined efforts have been made to bring Christian Churches closer to each other and reconcile their differences. Hence, Christian unity is at the *heart* of the ecumenical movement. This is clear in the series of studies, assemblies and statements that are organized and put in place. For more than a century, leaders and representatives of Churches from around the world have participated in conferences, symposiums, and various cooperative projects. Churches have been engaged in the process of dialogue and reconciliation through different ecumenical bodies and institutions. Yet after a century of discussions and encounters within the ecumenical movement many Churches remain divided.

Among the major challenges facing this goal of the ecumenical movement are the issues of “diversity” and “uniformity”. The problem is therefore that of how to handle diversity and

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<sup>1</sup> All biblical quotations in this research paper were taken from: M. D. Coogan (ed.), *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version, With the Apocrypha: an Ecumenical Study Bible*, Fully revised 4th ed., New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> *Unitatis Redintegratio, Vatican Council II: the Basic Sixteen Documents: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*. Northport, N.Y.: Costello; Dublin, Ireland: Dominican Publications, 1996, n. 4, 1.

<sup>3</sup> K. R. Ross, “Edinburgh 1910: A Defining Moment,” in: T. M. Johnson and K. R. Ross (eds.), *Atlas of Global Christianity, 1910-2010*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009, xvi.

uniformity in the pursuit of Christian unity. Do they constitute real problems that cannot be overcome and how are they to be addressed?

### 3. Research Question and Hypothesis

Owing to the fact that the quest for Christian unity today is crucial especially when we notice that in some cases “diversity has turned into division”,<sup>4</sup> the key research question of our work is: *Is it possible to discover in an experience of diversity and unity as in the Maronite<sup>5</sup>-Holy See<sup>6</sup> relationship, anything essential that may be relevant for the pursuit of Christian unity today?* Our hypothesis is that perhaps a look at the internal experience of a Church that overcame the problems of *diversity* and *uniformity* within itself may offer something relevant to the ecumenical movement today.<sup>7</sup>

### 4. Objective of the Research

The goal of our thesis is to study the experience of the Maronite Church as well as to analyze her relationship with the Holy See to see if new ways of speaking to the challenges of diversity and uniformity in Christian unity can be identified. We do not intend to propose the communion between the Maronite Church and the Holy See as a model of unity. Our major aim is rather to seek the possibility of defining a path to *unity* without negating *diversity*, thereby avoiding falling into the trap of *uniformity*. This study is interesting because the Maronite Church is an Eastern Catholic Church on the seat of Antioch which has her own specificity and uniqueness, yet is in full communion with the Holy See.

### 5. Review of Literature

There have been many reflections and researches on Christian unity along the development of the modern ecumenical movement. Two recent works within the ecumenical

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<sup>4</sup> WCC 10th Assembly, *Unity Statement*, 2013, n. 4.

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2013-busan/adopted-documents-statements/unity-statement> (access 18 November 2013).

<sup>5</sup> The name “Maronite Church” comes from a priest-hermit called Maron and the monastery built in the neighborhood of Apamea in Syria upon his tomb. The nucleus of the Maronite Church was formed by the disciples who got together around this monk Maron “during his lifetime and, after his death, around the monastery erected to his memory... The first Maronite Church in the mountains of Lebanon was established around 749”. The supreme head of this Church is the Patriarch helped by the bishops. (Cf. E. El-Hayek and S. Beggiani, “Maronite Church,” in: B. L. Marthaler (Executive ed.), *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., vol. 9, Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 2003, 192, 195.)

I will expand the information about the Maronite Church in chapter II.

<sup>6</sup> “Holy See” (also *Apostolic See*) is a term that refers to Rome “as the bishopric of the pope.” Its origin comes from the Latin “*Sancta Sedes*”, “which denotes the seat or residence of the bishop... The word see [chair] is accordingly applied to all bishoprics, although it was first used of the Churches founded by Apostles.” (Cf. B. Forshaw, “Holy See,” in: B. L. Marthaler (Executive ed.), *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, *Op. Cit.*, vol. 7, 44.)

<sup>7</sup> The Church in question can be any Church at all, but the choice of the Maronite-Holy See relationship owes to the fact that the researcher comes from the Maronite Church.

movement merit our attention: the first accomplished by Faith and Order Commission is the convergence text *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* of 2013.<sup>8</sup> In this document, the importance of Christian unity is highlighted with a call to overcome divisions and separations. The second is the Unity Statement of the 10th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 2013 at Busan. This statement speaks about the unity of the whole creation linking it to the unity of the Church and the human community. In this statement the Church is presented as a “servant”; a “prophetic sign” to the world of the kingdom of God.<sup>9</sup> Another work on Christian unity is *One Wind, Many Flames: Church Unity and the Diversity of the Churches*. In this book, the author presents and examines the biggest issue in the contemporary ecumenical movement: the issue of diversity. He thinks that the unity the Churches are searching for should be as visible as the differences.<sup>10</sup>

On the Maronite-Holy See relationship, some of the most significant works include *History of the Maronite Church*.<sup>11</sup> In this book, the author presents the development of the Maronite Church beginning with Saint Maron till the formation of the patriarchate. He also describes the major events in the history of this Eastern Church. Another work is *Rome et l’Eglise Syrienne Maronite d’Antioche*.<sup>12</sup> In this book, Bernard Ghobaira Al-Ghaziri presents and analyzes a variety of documents about the Maronites from 517 till 1531. An important literature regarding the Maronite Church is *Pentalogie Antiochienne, Domaine Maronite*.<sup>13</sup> The fifth part of volume 1, tome 1 of this work (entitled *De Latran IV à Vatican II. Relation des Maronites avec Rome*) presents some historical events of the Maronite Church and offers to the reader various documents regarding the Maronites’ relation with Rome.

However, none of the above mentioned works did explore neither the issue of diversity and uniformity in the search of unity nor the Maronite-Holy See relationship from the point of view of our study. None has tried to take the further step of seeking what may be discovered in this relationship that may be relevant for all Churches in the quest for unity. This in fact will constitute the originality as well as the unique contribution of our research paper.

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<sup>8</sup> *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, Faith and Order Paper, no. 214, Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013.

<sup>9</sup> WCC 10th Assembly, *Unity Statement*, 2013, *Op. Cit.*, n. 9.

<sup>10</sup> B. G. Thorogood, *One Wind, Many Flames: Church Unity and the Diversity of the Churches*, Risk book series, n.48, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991, 70.

<sup>11</sup> P. Dib, *History of the Maronite Church*, trans. Selly Beggiani, Detroit: Maronite Apostolic Exarchate, 1971.

<sup>12</sup> B. G. Al-Ghaziri, *Rome et l’Eglise Syrienne Maronite d’Antioche (517-1531): Thésés [sic], Documents, Lettres*, Beyrouth: Khalil Sarkis, 1906.

<sup>13</sup> Y. Moubarac (ed.), *Pentalogie Antiochienne, Domaine Maronite, t.1, Livre d’Histoire: Ecrits Fondateurs et Textes à l’Appui, vol.1, Les Maronites entre l’Orient Syrien et l’Occident Latin [خماسية انطاكية/ابعد مارونية]*, Beyrouth: Cénacle Libanais, 1984.

The word “*Pentalogie*” in English “*Pentalogy*” means “a pentad, esp [sic] of published works; a series of five related books.” (Cf. *The Chambers Dictionary*, [9th ed.], Edinburgh: Chambers, 2003, 1111.).



## **6. Scope and Limitations**

On account of the page limitation of the research paper for a “Master of Advanced Studies in Ecumenical Studies”, our work will not be exhaustive but will focus on those areas that we consider relevant to our study both for the search of unity within the ecumenical movement and the Maronite-Holy See relationship.

## **7. Methodology of the Research**

In order to attain the aim of our research, we are going to engage ourselves in a systematic research. The early parts of the study are going to be expository and historical while the later part will be analytic in nature. We will draw our materials and useful information from already existing sources. Our study will successively propose identified principles that can be applied in the quest for Christian unity.

## **8. Structure and Division**

Besides the introduction, the work will be divided into three chapters. In chapter one focusing on ‘the Ecumenical Movement and Christian Unity’, we will briefly speak about the modern ecumenical movement. We will also analyze the concept of unity and highlight two major challenges for the search of unity: uniformity and diversity. The second chapter is on ‘the Maronite Church and her Experience with the Holy See’. We intend in this chapter to focus on the identity of this Church, present the important events that marked the history of her relationship with the Holy See. Finally, in the third chapter, we will try to present possible ecumenical inferences from our studies in the preceding chapters, followed by a general conclusion.

## Chapter I: The Ecumenical Movement and Christian Unity

The word “*ecumenical*” comes from the Greek word *oikoumenē* which “literally has a geographical reference: that which pertains to the whole inhabited world”.<sup>14</sup> In Christian circles it is used within the context of Christian unity.<sup>15</sup> Ecumenism “is directed precisely to making the partial communion existing between Christians grow towards full communion in truth and charity.”<sup>16</sup>

The term “ecumenical movement” refers to the movement that seeks to bring Christians together by finding ways of narrowing their differences while focusing on what is held in common. The ecumenical movement is considered as “one of the most important events in the history of world Christianity.”<sup>17</sup> It encourages the Churches to serve and witness together to their faith in the Triune God. The WCC is a part of the ecumenical movement. But there are also other ecumenical bodies that play significant role in the ecumenical movement. These include the Christian World Communions (CWCs) which brings together Christians from various traditions; the Global Christian Forum (GCF) which also brings together representatives from diverse Christian Churches, member and non-member Churches in the WCC like the Roman Catholic, Pentecostals, etc. These ecumenical bodies and others offer opportunities for deepening and broadening encounters, discussions and activities on the way to visible unity.

Since the start of the World Council of Churches in 1948,<sup>18</sup> the ecumenical vision regarding Christian unity has developed and has gradually been accepted and appreciated by many Churches that initially looked with reservation at the ecumenical movement.<sup>19</sup> However, the global ecumenical situation is more and more complex today. Divisions between Churches continue and are rather on the increase. This brings us to reflect on series of questions: What *unity* do the Churches seek? What do we understand by “diversity” and “uniformity”? And in which ways are these two issues challenging the goal of the ecumenical movement? How is the ecumenical movement promoting and moving forward towards visible unity?

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<sup>14</sup> T. Early, “Ecumenical Movement,” in: P. K. Meagher; T. C. O’Brien and C. M. Aherne (eds.), *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion*, vol. A-E, Washington, D.C.: Corpus Publications, 1979, 1157.

<sup>15</sup> G. Goosen, *Bringing Churches Together: a Popular Introduction to Ecumenism*, Rev. and enlarged ed., Geneva: WCC Publications, 2001, 11.

<sup>16</sup> John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Ut Unum Sint of the Holy Father John Paul II on Commitment to Ecumenism*, Vatican City: Libreria Ed. Vaticana, [1995], n. 14.

<sup>17</sup> D. T. Irvin, *Hearing Many Voices: Dialogue and Diversity in the Ecumenical Movement*, Lanham: University Press of America, 1994, Preface.

For extended information about this topic, see “The Ecumenical Movement,” in: M. Lorke and D. Werner (eds.), *Ecumenical Visions for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: a Reader for Theological Education*, Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013, 30- 32.

<sup>18</sup> T. Stransky, “World Council of Churches,” in: N. Lossky *et al.* (eds.), *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 2nd ed., Geneva: WCC Publications, 2002, 1223- 1226.

<sup>19</sup> W. Visser’t Hooft, *Has The Ecumenical Movement A Future?*, trans. [From Dutch] Annebeth Mackie, Belfast: Christian Journals Limited, 1974, 21.

## 1. Christian Unity

The term “unity” comes from the Greek *henótēs*.<sup>20</sup> In the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, “unity, or oneness, is generally regarded as the attribute of a thing whereby it is undivided in itself and yet divided from others.”<sup>21</sup> The *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion* defines unity as “one of the most traditionally stated characteristics of the Church.”<sup>22</sup>

The first theological concepts of Church unity could be found in the New Testament. For example, in Ephesians, the Church is presented as the body of Christ; the temple of God (Eph.1;2). In light of this, the Church is understood “as the field of Christ’s activity”.<sup>23</sup> It may be said that the unity of the Church is not achieved by human efforts but it is given by God.<sup>24</sup> In the Gospel of John, the unity of the Church is also presented as a “divine gift”. It is a unity in Christ who is the vine (John15) without which the branches are nothing.<sup>25</sup>

The *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* states that “the unity of the church, while it is a goal yet to be realized in history, has as its essential presupposition the already-given oneness of the church.”<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* defines Church’s own unity as “an intrinsic necessity and, indeed, a given object of faith... It would no doubt increase the effectiveness of the Church’s mission, but even if it did not, it would still be necessary to strive for it.”<sup>27</sup> Unity is certainly “a primordial characteristic of the Church and it is required by its deep nature”.<sup>28</sup>

Many models of unity have been discussed in the World Council of Churches, especially by Faith and Order Commission and in bilateral dialogues. These models of unity are “statements of the nature and form of the full visible unity of the church”<sup>29</sup> which help the Churches to “speak and act as one on issues of faith and life.”<sup>30</sup> We will limit ourselves to the following models:

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<sup>20</sup> N. J. O., “Unity,” in: G. W. Bromiley (General ed.), *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, Grand Rapids Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988, 947.

<sup>21</sup> E. G. Salmon, “Unity,” in: B. L. Marthaler (Executive ed.), *New Catholic Encyclopedia, Op. Cit.*, vol. 14, 316.

<sup>22</sup> L. B. Guillot, “Unity,” in: P. K. Meagher P. K. Meagher; T. C. O’Brien and C. M. Aherne (eds.), *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion, Op. Cit.*, vol. O-Z, 3611.

<sup>23</sup> L. Vischer, U. Luz and C. Link, *Unity of the Church in the New Testament and Today*, trans. [From German] J. E. Crouch, Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010, 127- 129.

<sup>24</sup> *Id.*, 129.

<sup>25</sup> *Id.*, 141.

<sup>26</sup> G. Gassmann, “Unity,” in: N. Lossky *et al.* (eds.), *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement, Op. Cit.*, 1170.

<sup>27</sup> P. Misner, “Unity of the Church,” in: B. L. Marthaler (Executive ed.), *New Catholic Encyclopedia, Op. Cit.*, vol. 14, 319- 320.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation A New Hope for Lebanon*, n. 84; *Address of the Holy Father John Paul II to the Maronite Community*, n. 2.

<sup>29</sup> T. F. Best, “Models of Unity,” in: N. Lossky *et al.* (eds.), *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement, Op. Cit.*, 1173.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

- *Organic unity*: the third WCC assembly (New Delhi 1961) described organic unity as a call for the Churches to come together in one fellowship in which diversity is encouraged and authentic communion is experienced through the life of the Churches.<sup>31</sup>
- *Conciliar fellowship*: the fifth WCC assembly (Nairobi 1975) defined this model as a vision of achieving “organic unity” by developing conciliarity among Churches.<sup>32</sup> This fellowship between local Churches promotes companionship; mutual growth in love; faith and witness in order to accomplish visible unity.
- *Reconciled diversity* emerged especially from the international bilateral dialogues. It insists on “the legitimacy and importance of confessional identities and traditions for the unity of the church”<sup>33</sup> and calls for solidarity without seeking uniformity.
- *Communion of communions* is somehow a variation of *reconciled diversity*; communions would live in communion while keeping distinctive features.<sup>34</sup> In 1970, the secretary of the Secretariat of Promoting Christian Unity of the Catholic Church, Cardinal Willebrand suggested this model.<sup>35</sup> Confessions are considered in this model as the “form and expression of ecumenicity”.<sup>36</sup>

It is interesting to know that the concept of unity is developed in the ecumenical movement along with the search of Churches’ unity. The next subchapter will deal with the quest for unity in the ecumenical movement.

## 2. The Quest for Unity

The ecumenical movement has been striving for the realization of visible unity among Churches in the last two centuries. Visible unity presupposes knowledge of the other in order to break the wall of fear and hatred. It also implies a certain level of openness among Christians.

An observation of the cultural and social situation in the world shows that the human community is divided along the lines of race, culture, social class, politics, etc. These divisions together with theological differences are hard to pin and they continue to divide the life of the Churches.<sup>37</sup> Despite the historical, theological and sociological factors which separate them from being in communion with each other, the Churches commonly believe that the Body of Christ is

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<sup>31</sup> G. E. Thiessen and L. Hogan (eds.), *Ecumenical Ecclesiology: Unity, Diversity and Otherness in a Fragmented World*, Ecclesiological investigations, vol. 5, London, New York: T & T Clark, 2009, 54.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. T. F. Best, “Models of Unity,” in: N. Lossky *et al.* (eds.), *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement, Op. Cit.*, 1174.

<sup>33</sup> A. Keshishian, *Conciliar Fellowship: a Common Goal*, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1992, 64.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> T. F. Best, “Models of Unity,” in: N. Lossky *et al.* (eds.), *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement, Op. Cit.*, 1174.

<sup>36</sup> H. Fries and K. Rahner, *Unity of the Churches: an Actual Possibility*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press; New York: Paulist Press, 1985, 112- 113.

<sup>37</sup> F. Winfield, *Growing Together: Working for Unity Locally*, London: SPCK, 2002, 6.

one and that they should be united. Thus, the major task of ecumenism is to heal relationships among Churches for the sake of all humankind.<sup>38</sup>

The ecumenical movement remains steadfast to “the search for visible unity, not as an end in itself but in order to give credible witness”<sup>39</sup> to the world, to reconcile the divided humanity and serve the whole creation. It has encountered both progress and frustration in its quest for unity. The division between Churches is interpreted in different ways. Some Churches claim that the *one Church* is preserved in their own tradition while others consider divisions as “branches” of the same tree, and others would affirm that disunity is the result of the sinfulness of humanity.<sup>40</sup> But all would agree that division is against the will of God and against mission and witness. Indeed, the progress towards the ecumenical goal cannot be achieved unless there is awareness that unity should be realized within the social and cultural context.<sup>41</sup>

There have been different approaches to seeking unity: the bilateral and multilateral dialogues, the assemblies, the statements, the work of the WCC and other ecumenical bodies and organizations. All these efforts contribute to overcome some divisions. They also give an optimistic picture of what has been done till now. However, various challenges are slowing down the journey towards Christian unity. Among these challenges, there are *uniformity* and *diversity* that we will develop in the following subchapter.

### **3. The Challenges of Uniformity and Diversity**

The challenges to Church unity have changed and developed with the developments in the world of Christianity. As we have noted above, among these challenges two deserve careful thought: uniformity and diversity. Early discussions on Christian unity focused more on the challenge of uniformity while those of recent years give larger space to the challenge of diversity.

#### ***Uniformity***

Uniformity is the “state or condition in which everything is regular, homogeneous, or unvarying.”<sup>42</sup> It could also have the negative meaning of “lack of diversity or variation, esp. [sic] to the point of boredom or monotony; sameness.”<sup>43</sup> Uniformity in the Church “implies that every

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<sup>38</sup> T. F. Best and T. J. Nottingham (eds.), *The Vision of Christian Unity: a Life Given to the Ecumenical Quest- Essays in Honor of Paul A. Crow, Jr.*, Indianapolis: Oikoumene Publications, 1997, 91.

<sup>39</sup> M. Lorke and D. Werner (eds.), *Ecumenical Visions for the 21st Century*, *Op. Cit.*, 31.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. G. Gassmann, “Unity,” in: N. Lossky *et al.* (eds.), *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, *Op. Cit.*, 1170.

<sup>41</sup> J. Morris and N. Sagovsky (eds.), *The Unity we Have and the Unity we Seek: Ecumenical Prospects for the Third Millennium*, London, New York: T & T Clark, 2003, 174- 175.

<sup>42</sup> G. A. Wilkes and W. A. Krebs (eds.), *Collins English Dictionary*, [5th ed. updated], Glasgow: HarperCollins publishers, 2000, 1665.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

believer in all the centuries and in all the cultural settings can be contained within one faith framework”.<sup>44</sup> So, uniformity- which has the tendency to make everything same and uniform- constitutes a common problem for most Churches in their march towards unity. Furthermore, in the search of Christian unity, there is a risk of confusing unity for uniformity. In that case, Christian unity would mean uniting different Churches into one.

In recent years, Charismatic and Pentecostal movements have clearly made a difference in the life of the Church. These movements show how difficult and “impossible it is to contain Christianity in one predetermined pattern.”<sup>45</sup> From their experience and from other communities’ experience one could learn that insisting on uniformity, especially in the liturgy, is frustrating for Christian unity because it leaves no place for diversity.<sup>46</sup> In this sense, the fifth assembly of the WCC in Nairobi affirmed that true unity is not monolithic.<sup>47</sup> So, in thinking about the future of Christian unity it is important not to confuse uniformity with unity. But the question that remains is how it will be possible to achieve unity among Churches without demanding a certain degree of uniformity.

### ***Diversity***

Diversity is “the state or quality of being different or varied”.<sup>48</sup> There is diversity in philosophy, theology, ethics, ecclesiology, etc. Diversity is “an acknowledgment of the complexity of human life which is touched by the gospel.”<sup>49</sup> It “belongs to the very nature of ecclesial communion... however, [it becomes] wrongful and divisive when it prevents shared confession and celebration of the Gospel.”<sup>50</sup>

Among Christians, there is diversity in ways of responding to the same Christian faith and expressing it. There are also other diversities: cultural, social, geographical, ethnical, etc. For the Church, “diversity is just as essential as unity”.<sup>51</sup> It is to be maintained and prized in the quest for unity because each Church is unique and seeks to safeguard its identity and particularity, especially in the modern world of religious pluralism.

With the changing realities of the 21st century the quest for a visible unity among Christians is becoming more complicated. These realities include the expansion of the Church to

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<sup>44</sup> B. G. Thorogood, *One Wind, Many Flames: Church Unity and the Diversity of the Churches*, Op. Cit., 25.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> A. H. Wood, *Church Unity without Uniformity: a Study of Seventeenth-Century English Church Movements and of Richard Baxter’s Proposals for a Comprehensive Church*, London: The Epworth Press, 1963, 48.

<sup>47</sup> D. M. Paton (ed.), *Breaking Barriers, Nairobi 1975*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1976, 60.

<sup>48</sup> G. A. Wilkes and W. A. Krebs (eds.), *Collins English Dictionary*, Op. Cit., 454.

<sup>49</sup> B. G. Thorogood, *One Wind, Many Flames: Church Unity and the Diversity of the Churches*, Op. Cit., 29.

<sup>50</sup> A. Birmelé, “Unity of the Church,” in: J.-Y. Lacoste (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, vol. 3, New York; London: Routledge, 2005, 1654.

<sup>51</sup> J. MacQuarrie, *Christian Unity and Christian Diversity*, London: SCM Press, 1975, Preface.

the global South and the growth of ecclesial diversity with the emergence of new forms of being Church.<sup>52</sup> This reflects somehow the development that Christians are experiencing in their life.<sup>53</sup>

It is interesting to note that the spread of the Christians and Churches in the world is not only a result of missionary enterprise but also of human migration. Migration offers enrichment to Christian communities considering the fact that the majority of global migrants in 2012 were Christians.<sup>54</sup> Migration also poses many challenges such as that of building inclusive communities, the difference that the *other* brings in terms of identity, culture, tradition, etc. All this contributes to increase “cultural, theological and linguistic pluralism within Christian practice.”<sup>55</sup> It equally creates socio-political and economic tensions. It also raises the questions of integration and openness in Church communities and how Christians can witness to their commitment to unity by embracing the “other”.

Today, we see more diversity among the Churches, not less. A huge number of new Churches, denominations, ecclesial movements emerged in recent years around the world and participated to the change of global Christian landscape.<sup>56</sup> Christians are now made up of Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, Pentecostals, Evangelicals, Indigenous Churches, Independent Churches, etc. The same is true of people coming from different regions of the world, Africa, Asia, Middle East, Europe, etc. Each person’s belief in God is influenced by one’s faith tradition or one’s culture. Even among Christians of the same denomination, diversity still exists. Hence, it is important to seek ways of addressing the question of diversity if the quest for Christian unity has to be taken seriously. We will now proceed to see how the World Council of Churches is responding to these challenges within the framework of its vision and programmes.

#### **4. The World Council of Churches and Christian Unity**

The World Council of Churches (WCC) was established at Amsterdam assembly (1948).<sup>57</sup> It is “constituted by the churches to serve the one ecumenical movement. It incorporates the work of the world movements for Faith and Order, and Life and Work, the International Missionary Council, and the World Council of Christian Education”.<sup>58</sup> The background of its establishment is the World War (1914-18 and 1939-45) during the first half of

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<sup>52</sup> T. M. Johnson and K. R. Ross (eds.), *Atlas of Global Christianity, 1910-2010*, *Op. Cit.*, 8- 9.

<sup>53</sup> F. Winfield, *Growing Together: Working for Unity Locally*, *Op. Cit.*, 5.

<sup>54</sup> According to Pew Research Centre, 8 March 2012 quoted in: M. Lorke and D. Werner (eds.), *Ecumenical Visions for the 21st Century*, *Op. Cit.*, 276.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> D. T. Irvin, *Hearing Many Voices*, *Op. Cit.*, 7.

<sup>57</sup> W. A. Visser’t Hooft, “the Genesis of the World Council of Churches,” in: R. Rouse and S. Neill (eds.), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement I, 1517-1948*, 4th ed., Geneva: WCC, 1993, 702- 703.

<sup>58</sup> G. Goosen, *Bringing Churches Together: a Popular Introduction to Ecumenism*, *Op. Cit.*, 21- 23.

the 20th century and the need of the Churches to come together in such devastating situation.<sup>59</sup>

Its purposes are stated in its constitution:

The primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches is to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one Eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe.<sup>60</sup>

The WCC “became the most visible and international expression of varied streams of ecumenical life in the 20th century.”<sup>61</sup> It is in essence a *fellowship of Churches*, a prominent *instrument* through which Churches search Christian unity and promote it.<sup>62</sup> The WCC has contributed in developing the relationship between Churches and moving it towards fuller visible unity. It has carried out many programmes, activities, discussions and studies about Christian unity which undoubtedly have influenced the life of the Churches and helped to a better understanding of the Church and its unity.

We cannot talk about Christian unity without mentioning one of the most relevant WCC’s works, the New Delhi Statement of the 3rd WCC assembly in 1961.<sup>63</sup> In this seminal statement the goal of *visible unity* was affirmed, and the nature of unity was treated. An agreement on unity was formulated as a form of fellowship “in all places and all ages”<sup>64</sup> that “necessarily involves relationships between churches”.<sup>65</sup>

A famous document in the quest for Christian unity is the convergence text entitled *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM),<sup>66</sup> in 1982. It represents the ecumenical discussion within the Faith and Order commission of the WCC about the different understandings of sacraments and ministry that continue to divide the Churches. Another important document is *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*. This text addresses the different understandings of the nature of the Church which influence the understanding of Church unity. It talks about the diversities in spirituality, theology and liturgy which are integral to the nature of the Church. It

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<sup>59</sup> Cf. W. A. Visser’t Hooft, “The Genesis of the World Council of Churches,” in: R. Rouse and S. Neill (eds.), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement I, 1517-1948*, *Op. Cit.*, 708- 712.

<sup>60</sup> See: Constitution and Rules of the WCC. <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2006-porto-alegre/1-statements-documents-adopted/institutional-issues/constitution-rules-of-the-wcc-as-submitted-for-approval-to-the-assembly> (access 10 April 2014).

<sup>61</sup> T. Stransky, “World Council of Churches,” in: N. Lossky *et al.* (eds.), *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, *Op. Cit.*, 1223.

<sup>62</sup> *Id.*, 1225.

<sup>63</sup> WCC, New Delhi Statement on Unity, 1961. <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/1961-new-delhi/new-delhi-statement-on-unity> (access 18 November 2013).

<sup>64</sup> *Id.*, n. 2, 26.

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/ecumenical-movement-in-the-21st-century/wcc-and-the-ecumenical-movement-in-the-21st-century> (access 18 November 2013).

<sup>66</sup> See: *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper, no. 111, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991.



affirms the “legitimate diversity in the life of communion”<sup>67</sup> while still leaving open the question of how to make common discernment (between Churches) of legitimate diversity.<sup>68</sup>

Being convinced that prayer is at the heart of every effort toward unity and that divisions among Christians will not be overcome only through diakonia and dialogues,<sup>69</sup> the WCC together with the Pontifical Council of Promoting Christian Unity<sup>70</sup> promotes the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.<sup>71</sup> It also encourages other common prayers. These common prayers are considered as source of hope, joy, sorrow and reconciliation.<sup>72</sup>

To achieve its goal of addressing the divisions among Churches, the WCC’s work is organized around programme Units and Transversal Priorities. It is to be noted that Busan Assembly stressed on some important issues “which need to be taken up in the work of the Council in the coming period.”<sup>73</sup> These issues are:

- More work on spirituality and worship is needed. Hence, the WCC will develop worship further, being one of the transversal priorities;
- Ecumenical Formation should be a core programmatic area with Unity and Mission, Public Witness and Diakonia. The WCC has two major instruments in ecumenical formation: the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey and the ETE programme (Ecumenical Theological Education).<sup>74</sup>

The Ecumenical Institute of Bossey (established in 1946) is an important center of the WCC. It “offers... a vital, attractive and efficient model of ecumenical formation.”<sup>75</sup> It helps to see Church unity in the light of the unity of humankind and to “counterbalance a too-narrow, and often too-cautious, bureaucratic ecumenism.”<sup>76</sup> The ETE programme is an important instrument of the WCC which had provided remarkable achievements in renewing and developing theological education and ministerial formation.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, *Op. Cit.*, 16.

<sup>68</sup> *Id.*, 17.

<sup>69</sup> M. Lorke and D. Werner (eds.), *Ecumenical Visions for the 21st Century*, *Op. Cit.*, 354- 361.

<sup>70</sup> Established on the 5th of June 1960 by Pope John XXIII in preparation for the Second Vatican Council and confirmed by Pope Paul VI at its conclusion, the *Pontifical Council (Secretariat) of Promoting Christian Unity* (PCPCU) is the office of the Holy See responsible for promoting Christian unity.

<sup>71</sup> For more information, see: T. Best, “Week of Prayer for Christian Unity,” in: N. Lossky *et al.* (eds.), *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, *Op. Cit.*, 1203; and the website: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/week-of-prayer/week-of-prayer>

<sup>72</sup> M. Lorke and D. Werner (eds.), *Ecumenical Visions for the 21st Century*, *Op. Cit.*, 361.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. WCC Plans- March 2014 Version.

<sup>74</sup> For more information about the ETE programme and the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, see: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/education-and-ecumenical-formation>

<sup>75</sup> I. Sauca, “Ecumenical Formation in Bossey,” in: *The Ecumenical Review*, vol. 57.1, January 2005, 72.

<sup>76</sup> H.-R. Weber, “An ecumenical conspiracy,” in: T. F. Best and T. J. Nottingham (eds.), *The Vision of Christian Unity*, *Op. Cit.*, 218- 219.

<sup>77</sup> *Report to the Assembly Hearing 1991-1998, Programme Unit I, Unity and Renewal*, World Council of Churches, Geneva: WCC, Unit I, 1998, 53- 54.

The WCC is currently working in an integrated way which brings answers to the Churches' concerns and needs in the coming years. The Council implemented some transversal priorities in the programmatic areas of Unity and Mission, Public Witness and Diakonia and Ecumenical Formation. These priorities are:

- Relations with member churches, NCCs and REOs;
- Youth engagement in the ecumenical movement;
- Community of women and men;
- Inter-religious dialogue and cooperation;
- Spirituality and worship;
- Advocacy.<sup>78</sup>

Finally, going through the history of the World Council of Churches, one can notice and appreciate the accomplishments that brought different Churches closer together; yet Christians are still separated. In the next chapter we will look at the experience of the Maronite Church in her relationship with Rome in order to see whether there is any element that we could bring out from this experience that can contribute to a growth towards greater unity.

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<sup>78</sup> For more information, see the document: WCC Plans- March 2014 Version.

## Chapter II: The Maronite Church and her Experience with the Holy See

In this chapter, we will present an overview of the Maronite Church's history and identity. Then, we will explore the Maronite-Holy See relationship with particular reference to issues touching on uniformity and diversity. The term *communio* will be often used throughout this chapter, referring to the relation between Rome and the Maronite Church. For the Catholic Church *communio* / *communio* has a broad range of meanings. In our context, it is "used to designate the relationships between groups within the People of God... There is a communion among the Catholic Eastern Churches... and between those churches and the pope".<sup>79</sup>

### 1. An Overview of the Maronite Church's History

The Maronite Church is one of the largest Eastern Catholic Churches. She is the only Eastern-rite Church that has only Catholics.<sup>80</sup> In this section we will limit ourselves to those aspects of the Maronite history that are pertinent to our thesis.

The historical roots of the Maronite Church go back to the fourth century and to Saint Maron (dead 410). According to J. Van Paassen (cf. "Maro of Cyr" in: *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 9, 2003, 192.), St. Maron is a Syrian monk and spiritual father of the Maronites. He lived an ascetical life of penance and prayer on a mountaintop near Apamea on the Orontes River, Syria. His extraordinary spiritual knowledge attracted many disciples. At his death his disciples built a monastery<sup>81</sup> that will become the cradle of the Maronite Church. Later on, other monasteries were built. The people in the surrounding area lived under the jurisdiction of the monasteries, and their life was deeply influenced by the monastic traditions.<sup>82</sup>

The Maronites, throughout their history, struggled to preserve their autonomy and identity.<sup>83</sup> In the sixth century, many monasteries were burned by the Monophysites<sup>84</sup> and about 350 Maronite monks were massacred because they defended the doctrine of Chalcedon.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> R. Kress and G. Malanowski, "Communio," in: B. L. Marthaler (Executive ed.), *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, *Op. Cit.*, vol. 4, 29.

<sup>80</sup> Others have both Orthodox and Catholic e.g. Byzantine Orthodox and Byzantine Catholics, etc. (Cf. *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 7, 15th ed., Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1993, 867.).

<sup>81</sup> This monastery was destroyed before the middle of the tenth century.

<sup>82</sup> P. Dib, *History of the Maronite Church*, *Op. Cit.*, 7.

<sup>83</sup> B. J. Bailey and J. M. Bailey, *Who are the Christians in the Middle East?*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003, 92.

<sup>84</sup> *Monophysite* comes from the term *Monophysitism* (from monos, "sole", and phusis, "nature") which "designates the position of those who attribute to Christ a *single nature*." The Monophysitism represented by the monk Eutyches "implies a certain assimilation between the human nature and the divine nature of Christ, so that the divine absorbs the human rather than leaving to it its specific character." (Cf. M. Fédou, "Monophysitism," in: J.-Y. Lacoste (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, *Op. Cit.*, vol. 2, 1060.).

<sup>85</sup> E. El-Hayek and S. Beggianni, "Maronite Church," in: B. L. Marthaler (Executive ed.), *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, *Op. Cit.*, vol. 9, 193.

The Council of Chalcedon is the "Fourth Ecumenical Council, held at Chalcedon Oct. 8 to 31, 451... [It] represented a culmination in the history of the dogma of the Incarnation. Beyond dealing with the diverse

When the Arabs invaded Syria, the Patriarchal See of Antioch remained vacant [from 609 till 742]. During this period, the Maronites chose to have their own leader. In 685, the Maronites elected their first Patriarch, St John Maron.<sup>86</sup> The Patriarch was considered as a leader and representative of the Maronites.

Seeking refuge from the struggle against other Christian communities and Muslims, the Maronites abandoned the plains of Syria. They started to immigrate to Lebanon at the end of the seventh century. The Maronite Patriarchate was established at that time but without a complete ecclesiastical organization. The Maronites led a simple and isolated life devoted to God.<sup>87</sup> In the ninth century, the majority was settled in the mountains of Lebanon; others went elsewhere.<sup>88</sup> During this period, the Maronites practiced their own rite coming from the ancient Syriac tradition<sup>89</sup> of Antioch.<sup>90</sup>

At the time of the crusades (1098-1291),<sup>91</sup> the Maronites ended their isolation in the mountains. They established close bonds with the West, and their communion with the Holy See became stronger. Stimulated by this communion between Rome and the Maronites, the crusaders granted the Maronite Patriarch privileges and high respect.<sup>92</sup> After the departure of the crusaders, the Mamlûks<sup>93</sup> occupied the sea coast of Lebanon to prevent any attempt of their return. This action made the contact of the Maronites with Rome difficult. However, they enjoyed an internal autonomy in their political life.<sup>94</sup>

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theological tendencies that confronted each other, it stated the ... doctrine that preserved indissolubly the two facets of the mystery: the unity of person in the Incarnate Word and the perfect integrity of His two natures.” (Cf. P. T. Camelot, “Council of Chalcedon,” in: B. L. Marthaler (Executive ed.), *New Catholic Encyclopedia, Op. Cit.*, vol. 3, 363- 366.).

<sup>86</sup> John Maron was the first of a succession of monks-patriarchs that carried on without interruption till the 17th century. (Cf. P. Dib, *History of the Maronite Church, Op. Cit.*, 43- 44, 48.).

<sup>87</sup> M. Awit, *Les Maronites: Qui Sont-Ils ? Que Veulent-Ils ?*, [Bkerké, Lebanon]: M. Awit, [1989?], 63.

<sup>88</sup> The majority went to the Island of Cyprus, according to P. Dib in: *History of the Maronite Church, Op. Cit.*, 53.

<sup>89</sup> The Syriac liturgical rite “is basically the ancient liturgical rite of the Antiochene Church of the 4th century. Greek was the liturgical language used... but gradually it was changed to the vernacular Syriac. Today, Arabic is universally used, as the ancient Syriac tongue has fallen into general disuse.” (Cf. G. A. Maloney/Eds., “Syrian Liturgy,” in: B. L. Marthaler (Executive ed.), *New Catholic Encyclopedia, Op. Cit.*, vol. 13, 710.).

<sup>90</sup> J.-M. Billioud, *Histoire des Chrétiens d’Orient*, Paris: Editions L’Harmattan, 1995, 199.

<sup>91</sup> The Crusades constitute the European military expeditions which were directed by Christians against Muslim control of Jerusalem and the Christian shrine of the Holy Sepulchre. For more information, see: *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Op. Cit.*, vol. 3, 764.

<sup>92</sup> J. Mahfouz, *Précis d’Histoire de l’Eglise Maronite, Op. Cit.*, 119.

<sup>93</sup> Mamlûk (Arabic: owned, possessed as a slave) “became the name of the dynasty that ruled in Egypt, Syria into Southeast Asia Minor, and the northeast quadrant of Arabia from 648/1250 to 922/1516-17. It was founded by Turkic and Circassian slave-soldiers... Religiously, they were quite staunchly SUNNÎ, and sought to maintain their religious views where they reigned. The Mamlûk sultanate ruled over Egypt from 648/1250 to 922/1517, and over Syria from 658/1260 to 922/1516.” (Cf. G. D. Newby, *A Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*, Oxford: Oneworld, 2002, 139- 140.).

<sup>94</sup> E. El-Hayek, S. Beggiani, “Maronite Church,” in: B. L. Marthaler (Executive ed.), *New Catholic Encyclopedia, Op. Cit.*, vol. 9, 196.

In 1516, the Ottoman Turks<sup>95</sup> conquered Syria. The Maronites suffered greatly during the almost four centuries of the Ottomans' Empire.<sup>96</sup> The Patriarchs had their share of the general calamity and suffering.<sup>97</sup> But the persecution and the martyrdom that the Maronites endured at that time did not prevent them from preserving their faith, their dignity and their identity. Furthermore, this period was marked by a renewal of the Maronite Church through the application of the decisions of the Council of Trent.<sup>98</sup> The "Maronite Renaissance" began with the establishment of the Maronite College in Rome in 1584 by Pope Gregory XIII.<sup>99</sup>

During the Ottoman period the king of France, Francis I signed the first capitulation (with the Turks) which founded the protectorate of France in the East. And at the beginning of the seventeenth century the French influence was established in Lebanon. France intervened more than once to allow the Maronites' religious leaders to carry out their pastoral responsibilities, but was unable to protect them from persecutions.<sup>100</sup> There were times when the kings failed in their responsibilities toward the Maronites. In such cases the Holy See would remind them of their commitment.<sup>101</sup>

In 1736, the synod of Mount Lebanon took place. It led to the division of the Patriarchate into eparchies and dioceses.<sup>102</sup> This synod will indeed reaffirm the orthodoxy of the Maronite Church and forever change her structure until the significant events of the twentieth century.

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<sup>95</sup> Ottoman dynasty "was named after its founder, Osman I (656/1258-727/1326), a member of a branch of the Oğuz Turks, although the name itself was derived from Arabic ('Uthmân). The dynasty expanded from a remote outpost in Antolia to encompass the Middle East to the borders of Iran, Antolia, Europe to the northern borders of Hungary, and the coast of North Africa almost to the Atlantic Ocean. Building on their GHĀZĪ heritage, which embraced cavalry warfare, a JIHĀD ideology, and a SUNNĪ notion of religious state, they offered non-Muslims DHIMMĪ status, which meant that they could incorporate them into the state without forcing the population to convert... Unable to sustain itself economically or militarily, the empire was dissolved after World War I by the victors, the British, the French, the Italians, and the Russians."(Cf. G. D. Newby, *A Concise Encyclopedia of Islam, Op. Cit.*, 168.).

<sup>96</sup> J. Mahfouz, *Précis d'Histoire de l'Eglise Maronite, Op. Cit.*, 128.

<sup>97</sup> For more information, see:

[http://www.bkerkelb.org/english/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=105:-the-years-of-difficulties&catid=60:the-last-10-centuries&Itemid=53](http://www.bkerkelb.org/english/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=105:-the-years-of-difficulties&catid=60:the-last-10-centuries&Itemid=53)

<sup>98</sup> E. El-Hayek, S. Beggiani, "Maronite Church," in: B. L. Marthaler (Executive ed.), *New Catholic Encyclopedia, Op. Cit.*, vol. 9, 197.

Trent is the "Nineteenth Ecumenical Council, which opened at Trent, Italy, on Dec. 13, 1545, and closed there on Dec. 4, 1563, having held 25 sessions. The Council's objective was the order and clarification of Catholic doctrine, and legislation for a thorough reform of the Church... [It] was the Church's answer to the Protestant REFORMATION. It delimited Catholic doctrine sharply from Protestant doctrine and eliminated the disastrous obscurity as to what was an essential element of the faith and what was merely a subject for theological controversy... The reform decrees of the Council were a compromise between the radical reformers' wishes and the curial tradition, not an ideal solution but a serviceable one. Wherever implemented, they effected a renewal and strengthening of ecclesiastical life." (Cf. H. Jedin, "Council of Trent," in: B. L. Marthaler (Executive ed.), *New Catholic Encyclopedia, Op. Cit.*, vol. 14, 168- 176.).

<sup>99</sup> E. El-Hayek and S. Beggiani, "Maronite Church," in: B. L. Marthaler (Executive ed.), *New Catholic Encyclopedia, Op. Cit.*, vol. 9, 198.

<sup>100</sup> P. Dib, *History of the Maronite Church, Op. Cit.*, 176- 177.

<sup>101</sup> *Id.*, 157.

<sup>102</sup> *Id.*, 43- 44, 48.

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the life of the Maronite Church was marked by several events. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)<sup>103</sup> brought a great renewal in the Maronite Church. The participation of the Patriarch and bishops in this Council gave the Maronite Church strength to affront the hard moments of the so-called Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990).<sup>104</sup>

In 1997, Pope John Paul II visited Lebanon. During this visit, the Pope addressed an Apostolic Exhortation, *A New Hope for Lebanon* that contributed to the convening of the Maronite Patriarchal Synod (2003-2006).<sup>105</sup> This visit was followed by another one made by Pope Benedict XVI in 2012 in spite of security concerns at that difficult time. The Pope came as a “pilgrim of peace”. His visit proved his commitment to the country and to Christians of this region including the Maronites.<sup>106</sup> Both papal visits had positive impacts on the Maronite Church and the Middle East. After presenting the historical events which marked the Maronite-Holy See relationship, we will speak in the next subchapter about the identity of the Maronite Church.

## 2. The Identity of the Maronite Church

The question of the identity plays a role in Christian diversity; a Church is distinguished from another through its identity. The Maronite Church has her own identity built, as any other Christian identity, on the Mystery of Salvation. In the following, we will highlight few characteristics of the Maronite Church.

- The Maronite Church is an Antiochene Syriac Church characterized by her apostolic zeal. She has a rich Syriac liturgical heritage and a patriarchal system rooted in the Episcopate Synodal System.<sup>107</sup> It is important to mention that the Maronites share the same historical, liturgical and spiritual heritage with the other Catholic and Orthodox Antiochene Churches.
- She is a Chalcedonian Church living her faith in “the Mystery of Incarnation” according to the Chalcedonian Creed (451). Her commitment to this Creed contributed to the development of her spirituality in the Eastern environment. It also consolidated her communion with the Apostolic See.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> “When he called the Second Vatican Council, Pope John XXIII wanted it to renew Roman Catholic spirituality, heal divisions within Christianity, and alter the Roman Catholic Church’s reactionary attitude to the world... Pope Paul VI...closed it on December 8, 1965... Vatican II produced 16 documents... The central document was “the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church”. (Cf. G. O’ Collins, “Vatican Council II,” in: D. Patte (ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity*, Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 1285.).

<sup>104</sup> B. J. Bailey and J. M. Bailey, *Who are the Christians in the Middle East?, Op. Cit.*, 93.

<sup>105</sup> This synod is considered as one of the significant synods in the history of the Maronite Church after the famous Synod of 1736. (Cf. *Maronite Patriarchal Synod 2003-2006: Texts & Recommendations*. Bkerke; Jounieh: Imprimerie Moderne Kreim, 2008, Introduction).

<sup>106</sup> <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/1203891.htm>

<sup>107</sup> *Maronite Patriarchal Synod, Op. Cit.*, Chapter I.

<sup>108</sup> *Id.*, Chapter II.

- She is a Patriarchal Church with ascetic and monastic aspects that influenced her ecclesiastical body and spirituality. The monastic life is the “soul of the Eastern Churches”<sup>109</sup> and has evangelical and pastoral objectives. Since the eighth century, the Maronites have emerged as an independent ecclesiastical body within the Antiochene See.<sup>110</sup>
- She is a Church incarnated in her Lebanese and Eastern environment. In this pluralistic and multi-confessional context, she is called to an ecumenical mission. The expression of Pope John Paul II expresses the Lebanese identity: “Lebanon is more than a country. It is a mission...”<sup>111</sup> The Maronite Church is also incarnated in the countries of expansion, namely due to emigration from the second half of the nineteenth century up till now. The Maronites in the countries of expansion try to keep unity among them. They try to reinforce the ties to their roots and preserve the liturgy and the spirituality of their Mother Church.<sup>112</sup>
- She is an Eastern Church in full communion with the Apostolic See. This union is unique, characterized by its historical roots. It gave the Maronite Church a complicated structure, joining a Patriarchal system, typical of Eastern Churches, with a Roman hierarchical system, specific for the Catholic Church. It also gave the Maronite Church a specific ecumenical role in the Middle East.<sup>113</sup>

such communion was never a passing matter dictated by historical circumstances. Its constant continuity to this very day is a splendid expression of her steadfast faithfulness to a deep rooted ecclesiastic heritage common to both East and West, entrusting the Bishop of Rome, successor of Peter, Head of the Apostles, with the charge of watching over the visible unity of Christ’s Church and serving the communion among the Churches.<sup>114</sup>

The Maronite Church is part of the Universal Catholic Church. She is particularly known for her love and devotion to the Holy See since the beginning of her relationship with Rome. In the next section we will explore this relationship in a more historically detailed manner.

### **3. The Relationship Between the Maronite Church and the Holy See**

The Maronite-Holy See relationship goes back to the early life of the Maronite Church. The official communion with Rome happened in the eleventh century. The Maronites traditionally elect their Patriarch in a synod. Once elected the Patriarch will send a letter to the

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<sup>109</sup> John Paul II, *Orientalis Lumen*, Washington, District of Columbia: United States Catholic Conference, 1995, n. 9.

<sup>110</sup> *Maronite Patriarchal Synod, Op. Cit.*, Chapter III.

<sup>111</sup> John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter to All Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Situation in Lebanon*, 1989, n. 6.

<sup>112</sup> *Maronite Patriarchal Synod, Op. Cit.*, Chapter V.

<sup>113</sup> *Id.*, Chapter IV.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

Pope in which he declares his obedience and asks the pallium.<sup>115</sup> The Pope, in response, will send a letter of encouragement to the Patriarch in which he expresses his love.<sup>116</sup> But the Maronite-Holy See relation was not limited to the exchange of letters.<sup>117</sup> There was also an exchange of gifts, missions and visits.<sup>118</sup> The Maronites' communion with Rome has been maintained though it has had its ups and downs.<sup>119</sup>

After the Council of Chalcedon, the monks in Syria addressed a petition in 517 to Pope Hormisdas telling him about the persecutions of the Maronites by the non-Chalcedonian. The Pope replied in 518, by giving honor to their faith and encouraging them to persevere in defending the doctrinal truth. Hence, the Maronites keep saying: "my faith is that of Peter."<sup>120</sup>

Also, Arabs' vexations during the Turkish Empire were sometimes provoked by the jealousy of other Eastern Christians. In the words of Patriarch Douayhi to Pope Innocent XI, the Maronites were hated all the more because of their relationship with Rome.<sup>121</sup> The Maronites' relation with Rome could barely be maintained at that time because all communication with the West was blocked.<sup>122</sup>

The arrival of the crusaders to Lebanon in the eleventh century allowed the Maronite Church to resume and reinforce her relationship with the Holy See.<sup>123</sup> Because the Maronites considered themselves in full communion with the faith of the Latin Church,<sup>124</sup> they easily adopted certain Latin usages at that time; e.g. their clergy wore "ring, miter and cross, while the other Eastern Christians did not."<sup>125</sup> They also frequented the Latin Churches and celebrated on their altars using the articles of Western clergy.

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<sup>115</sup> The *pallium* is "originally a rectangular cloak, often worn by philosophers, ascetics, and clergy. Later a narrow band worn over the shoulders and hanging down in front and back, conferred on archbishops or patriarchs by the Pope as a sign of legitimacy." (Cf. D. Patte (ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity, Op. Cit.*, 920.).

<sup>116</sup> M. Awit, *Les Maronites: Qui Sont-Ils ? Que Veulent-Ils ?*, *Op. Cit.*, 77, 98.

<sup>117</sup> Read a sample of these letters (One from the Maronite Patriarch to the Pope and the other is from the Pope to the Patriarch) in Appendix 1 pages 38- 40.

<sup>118</sup> P. Dib, *History of the Maronite Church, Op. Cit.*, 62.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. C. A. Kimball, *Angle of Vision: Christians and the Middle East*, New York: Friendship Press, 1992, 34; J. Mahfouz, *Précis d'Histoire de l'Eglise Maronite, Op. Cit.*, 93- 94.

<sup>120</sup> J. Mahfouz, *Précis d'Histoire de l'Eglise Maronite, Op. Cit.*, 91- 92.

<sup>121</sup> The quotation in French is: « Nous sommes haïs encore davantage à cause de vous ». Cf. P. Dib, *History of the Maronite Church, Op. Cit.*, 119.

<sup>122</sup> *Id.*, 58.

<sup>123</sup> *Id.*, 58- 59.

One important document showing the establishment of Maronite-Holy See relations is a letter of Gabriel Ibn al-Qela'i to patriarch Simon of Hadeth written in 1494. This letter indicates the Maronite tradition of requesting pontifical confirmation of the Patriarch's election. (See: Appendix 2 page 41.).

<sup>124</sup> The Latin Church, or Latin Rite "is the part of the Church that follows the ROMAN RITE in liturgy, [it] has its own special canonical discipline, and is subject to the bishop of Rome". (Cf. A. Caron/Eds., "Latin Rite," in: B. L. Marthaler (Executive ed.), *New Catholic Encyclopedia, Op. Cit.*, vol. 8, 367.).

<sup>125</sup> P. Dib, *History of the Maronite Church, Op. Cit.*, 58.



A crucial point in the Maronite-Holy See relationship is found during the periods of the Latinization<sup>126</sup> of the Maronites which began when Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) sent his legate, Cardinal Peter of Amalfi to Lebanon. The Pope wrote to the Maronites ordering them to be conform to the Roman Church.<sup>127</sup> Popes Alexander IV and Nicholas III made also the same request.<sup>128</sup> In 1215, Patriarch Jeremia Al Amshiti went to Rome and participated in the work of the fourth Lateran Council.<sup>129</sup> This was the first visit made by an Oriental Patriarch to the Holy See. It will be followed by another visit made by Patriarch Jeremia Dmalsa in 1297.<sup>130</sup>

When the crusaders were defeated and their Syrian Empire had fallen, some of them were welcomed by the Maronites. This hospitality shown to the crusaders refugees was appreciated by the Holy See. Pope Alexander IV (1254-61) sent a letter of thanks to the Maronite Patriarch Simon and addressed him as “Maronite Patriarch of Antioch”.<sup>131</sup> This title was confirmed by Pope Benedict XIV in 1744.<sup>132</sup>

In 1439, Patriarch Jean Al Hajj gave homage to Pope Eugene IV. He confirmed to him the adhesion of the Maronite Church to the decisions taken at the Council of Florence,<sup>133</sup> being convinced that this adhesion will help to strengthen the Eastern Christians’ unity with the Holy See.<sup>134</sup> Despite the close relationship between the Maronite Church and the Latin Church, differences in ritual were still considerable. The Maronites retained many Oriental liturgical

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<sup>126</sup> The noun is “Latinization”; the verb is “Latinize” which means giving “a Latin form to; ...convert (a person, a people) to the ideas, costumes, etc. of the Latins, or to the rites etc. of the Latin Church.” (Cf. W. R. Trumble and A. Stevenson, *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, vol.1, 5th ed., Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 1548.)

<sup>127</sup> Read the extract of the Pope’s Letter in Appendix 3 page 42.

<sup>128</sup> P. Dib, *History of the Maronite Church*, *Op. Cit.*, 62.

<sup>129</sup> “The Lateran basilica was from early times the particular cathedral of the bishop of Rome; and from 313... the Lateran palace provided a meeting place for many Councils convened by papal authority. Among these... the meetings of 1123 [First Council], 1139 [Second Council], 1179 [Third Council], 1215 [Fourth Council], and 1512 to 1517 [Fifth Council] that are of outstanding importance... The fourth Lateran (12th ecumenical) Council... is sometimes called... ‘the Great Council’. It is generally considered the most important Council before the Council of TRENT. [This Council] whose canons were for the first time promulgated in the name of the Pope, is aptly considered a culminating point in the history of medieval papal legislation and leadership of Christendom, with its concern for all problems of the universal Church and every class of person in the *Societas Christiana*.” (Cf. C. Duggan/N. H. Minnich, “Lateran Councils,” in: B. L. Marthaler (Executive ed.), *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, *Op. Cit.*, vol. 8, 350- 355.)

<sup>130</sup> J. Mahfouz, *Précis d’Histoire de l’Eglise Maronite*, *Op. Cit.*, 92- 93.

<sup>131</sup> This title had been given only to the Latin Patriarch during the 13th century.

<sup>132</sup> E. El-Hayek, S. Beggiani, “Maronite Church,” in: B. L. Marthaler (Executive ed.), *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, *Op. Cit.*, vol. 9, 196.

<sup>133</sup> Council of Florence (1438-45), “also named Ferrara-Florence (it met one year in Ferrara). It was called by the Pope as a continuation of, and substitute for, the Conciliarist Council of Basel (1431-49)... The chief purpose was to consider reunion with the Greek Orthodox Church.” (Cf. D. Patte (ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity*, *Op. Cit.*, 428.). “*Laetentur caeli* is an infallible document, the only one of the Council. The union it expressed in Florence was real and, in a sense, model. It defined that the Latin faith and the traditional Greek faith were identical and allowed difference in their expression. It did not impose on the Greeks the addition of *Filioque* to the creed, it approved difference in Eucharistic rite... A more important effect of the Council was perhaps the check it gave to conciliarism.” (Cf. J. Gill, “Council of Florence,” in: B. L. Marthaler (Executive ed.), *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, *Op. Cit.*, vol. 5, 770- 772.)

<sup>134</sup> J. Mahfouz, *Précis d’Histoire de l’Eglise Maronite*, *Op. Cit.*, 93.

uses: Confirmation was conferred immediately after Baptism; the mass of the Pre-sanctified was celebrated every day during Lent; Communion under both species was upheld.<sup>135</sup>

Between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries the Maronite-Holy See relations were maintained thanks to missionaries, especially Franciscans and Jesuits. A good example was the Franciscan Father Gryphon on account of whom Rome allowed the Maronites to keep various customs specific to the Oriental Church.<sup>136</sup> There was also the Jesuit Father Eliano who requested the Pope to grant the Maronites a College in Rome. This College was eventually founded by Pope Gregory XIII in 1584.<sup>137</sup> The good relationship with Rome is seen especially with the Pontificates of Pope Leo X and Pope Clement VII. From 1535 the Holy See endowed exclusively the Maronite community among other Eastern Catholics with papal missions.<sup>138</sup>

The Protestant Reformation had its own effect on the Maronite-Holy See relations. After the Council of Trent (1545-1563), it was necessary for the Catholic Church to consolidate liturgical doctrine and practice. The Pope sent successive missions to Lebanon to introduce Trent's decrees. This was under the reigns of the Patriarchs of Al-Rizzi family.<sup>139</sup> In 1578, Pope Gregory XIII sent a letter to the Maronite Patriarch reminding him of these reforms (e.g. the suppression of the expression "who was crucified for us" in the Trisagion;<sup>140</sup> the preparation of the Chrism<sup>141</sup> following the Latin style, using only balsam and oil). Also, "conferring of Confirmation was to be reserved to the bishops, Holy Communion was not to be given to little children; and the Latin impediments to marriage of consanguinity and affinity were to be adopted."<sup>142</sup>

Problems started to emerge around 1567. The Maronites felt the need for being educated; so Patriarch Moussa Akkari asked Pope Paul III to have a College in Lebanon. Patriarch Rizzi

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<sup>135</sup> Such form of Communion was maintained till the end of the 16th century. (Cf. Y. Moubarac (ed.), *Pentalogie Antiochienne, Domaine Maronite, Op. Cit.*, 605.).

<sup>136</sup> *Id.*, 612.

<sup>137</sup> *Id.*, 642.

This College is considered one of the important consequences of the Papal legations to Lebanon in 1578 and 1580, and a sign of consolidation of the links between the Maronites and Rome.

<sup>138</sup> In 1515, Pope Leo X wrote to Patriarch Simeon "to congratulate him on the perseverance of the Maronites in the true faith. [He] called the Maronites: 'roses among thorns'." Pope Clement VII "showed a special good will to the Maronites". He designated for them Cardinal Marcel Cervini as protector. (Cf. P. Dib, *History of the Maronite Church, Op. Cit.*, 98; J. Mahfouz, *Précis d'Histoire de l'Eglise Maronite, Op. Cit.*, 93.).

<sup>139</sup> Michel Rizzi (1567-1581); Sarkis Rizzi (1581-1596); Joseph Rizzi (1596- 1608).

<sup>140</sup> *Trisagion* ("three times holy") is a "hymn based on the seraphim's praise of God (Isa 6:3); it became the focus of controversy when the so-called theopaschite supplement added that one of the Trinity was 'crucified for us.' Eventually it was agreed that this notion should be qualified by the phrase 'in the flesh', maintaining the difference between Christ's human and divine natures." (Cf. D. Patte (ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity, Op. Cit.*, 1252.).

<sup>141</sup> "Chrism" derives from Greek *chrisma*. It is "olive oil mixed with diverse substances (depending on the church), used for anointing in the Greek and Latin churches in the sacraments of baptism, chrismation, confirmation, and orders (a different oil is used in anointing the sick)." (Cf. D. Patte (ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity, Op. Cit.*, 210.).

<sup>142</sup> E. El-Hayek and S. Beggianni, "Maronite Church," in: B. L. Marthaler (Executive ed.), *New Catholic Encyclopedia, Op. Cit.*, vol. 9, 197.

made the same request to Pope Gregory XIII asking in addition, Arabic books on catechism and a College in Rome where the Maronites could learn before coming back to Lebanon to educate others.<sup>143</sup> The Pope appreciated this request though with some doubts about the orthodoxy of the Patriarch.<sup>144</sup> Thus, in 1577 the Jesuit legates<sup>145</sup> Father Jean Baptist Eliano and Father Touma Raggio were sent to keep a close watch on the Maronite liturgy and prayers.<sup>146</sup>

The legates' visit was interrupted quickly. Father Eliano was sent again by the Pope in 1580 with Father Jean-Baptiste Bruno. A synod was held at Qannoubin in August 1580. The Maronite Church took into consideration the reform proposed by Pope Gregory XIII. But the decrees of Qannoubin synod "remained 'dead letters' because it was practically impossible to change well-established customs among Maronites."<sup>147</sup> After this synod, many manuscripts and ecclesial books were burned because they were suspected of heresy by Father Eliano. This latter attributed to the Maronites doctrinal errors of other Eastern Christians (Jacobites).<sup>148</sup> By this act, the Maronite Church lost a precious treasure relating to her roots.

In 1596, Pope Clement VIII sent a new legate, Father Jérôme Dandini to examine the Maronites' faith (liturgy, habits, books, etc.). When Father Dandini arrived to Lebanon, the news about Rome believing that the Maronites follow heresies was spread among the Maronites. The Maronites and their Patriarch Rizzi defended their cause. They tried to prove that they were far from any heresy and that they had always followed the teaching of the Church. They expressed their obedience and loyalty to the Pope, but rejected any kind of assaults addressed to their traditions and habits.<sup>149</sup>

Towards the end of the sixteenth century, the influence of the west on the life of the Maronite Church became clear. The pontifical authority, the Latin missionaries and a big number of the Maronite College's students contributed to increase the Latinization of the Maronite rite.<sup>150</sup> Changes were made, especially in the liturgy. The Maronite Church even appropriated

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<sup>143</sup> M. Awit, *Les Maronites: Qui Sont-Ils ? Que Veulent-Ils ?*, *Op. Cit.*, 115.

<sup>144</sup> According to Michel Awit, the Pope at the last minute learned that something is wrong in the faith of the Patriarch.

<sup>145</sup> Up to that time, the representatives of the Holy See had been only Franciscans.

<sup>146</sup> M. Awit, *Les Maronites: Qui Sont-Ils ? Que Veulent-Ils ?*, *Op. Cit.*, 100- 101.

<sup>147</sup> E. El-Hayek and S. Beggiani, "Maronite Church," in: B. L. Marthaler (Executive ed.), *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, *Op. Cit.*, vol. 9, 197- 198.

<sup>148</sup> J. Mahfouz, *Précis d'Histoire de l'Eglise Maronite*, *Op. Cit.*, 93- 95.

« The title Jacobite [Syrian]...comes from the name of James BARADAI, who organized a faction within the Syrian Orthodox Church... The name Jacobite was applied by the Byzantine Orthodox to differentiate the non-Chalcedonian Syrian Oriental Orthodox Church, which is not in communion with either Constantinople or Rome." (Cf. E. El Hayek/EDS., "Jacobites (Syrian)," in: B. L. Marthaler (Executive ed.), *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, *Op. Cit.*, vol. 7, 691.).

According to Patriarch Douayhi, Jacobites had the same language and their sacramental rites are slightly different from those of the Maronites (Quoted by Y. Moubarac in: *Pentalogie Antiochienne, Domaine Maronite*, *Op. Cit.*, 637.).

<sup>149</sup> M. Awit, *Les Maronites: Qui Sont-Ils ? Que Veulent-Ils ?*, *Op. Cit.*, 103- 104.

<sup>150</sup> P. Dib, *History of the Maronite Church*, *Op. Cit.*, 207.

some of these changes so they became an integral part of her liturgical life. The first edition of the Maronite Missal reflected the Latinization through the substitution of the words of institution in all anaphoras by those of the Roman rite.<sup>151</sup> And in 1606, the Patriarch succeeded in imposing the Gregorian calendar on the Maronite Church in Lebanon.<sup>152</sup>

The Latinization had negative effects on the Maronite Church and even created confusion. There was a strong need to redress the situation. Many synods were held but without tangible results.<sup>153</sup> In 1736, a synod was held in Mount Lebanon. It gave many services to the Maronite community,<sup>154</sup> but at the same time bestowed the Maronite Church a constitution like the Latin Church.<sup>155</sup> This synod marked through its canons “the ratification of liturgical and canonical Latinization that the Holy See had tried to introduce into the Maronite Church since the time of the crusades”.<sup>156</sup> But again its decrees remained somehow unobserved in practice.<sup>157</sup> The Maronite’s resistance to the uniformity gradually began to yield results. Rome began to rethink her approaches. In 1894, Pope Leo XIII affirmed that maintaining Eastern Rites is important. He stated:

In point of fact there is more importance than can be believed in preserving the Eastern rites. Their antiquity is august, it is what gives nobility to the different rites, it is a brilliant jewel for the whole Church, it confirms the God-given unity of the Catholic Faith. For that very reason, even as her Apostolic origin is all the more proven especially by these Churches of the East, at the selfsame moment there shines out and is made manifest these Churches' original, complete unity with the Roman Church.<sup>158</sup>

In the twentieth century, many Patriarchs have been elected Cardinals as a sign of rapprochement between the Holy See and the Oriental Catholic communities.<sup>159</sup> The Second Vatican Council brought a renewal in the Maronite-Holy See relationship. The reformation of the Maronite liturgy started, a return back to the roots was emphasized especially with the 2003-2006 Maronite Patriarchal Synod. This synod urged a consolidation of the Maronite identity and

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<sup>151</sup> This edition was printed in Rome between 1592 and 1594. In 1992, changes were made in the recent edition of the Maronite Missal. All Latinizations have been removed. Hence, the traditional words of institution have replaced the Latin one. (Cf. S. Beggiani, “Maronite Liturgy,” in: B. L. Marthaler (Executive ed.), *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, *Op. Cit.*, vol. 9, 201.).

<sup>152</sup> E. El-Hayek and S. Beggiani, “Maronite Church,” in: B. L. Marthaler (Executive ed.), *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, *Op. Cit.*, vol. 9, 198.

<sup>153</sup> M. Awit, *Les Maronites: Qui Sont-Ils ? Que Veulent-Ils ?*, *Op. Cit.*, 138, 144.

<sup>154</sup> *Id.*, 125.

<sup>155</sup> V. Gheorghiu, *Christ au Liban: de Moïse aux Palestiniens*, [Paris]: Plon, 1979, 136- 146.

<sup>156</sup> E. El-Hayek and S. Beggiani, “Maronite Church,” in: B. L. Marthaler (Executive ed.), *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, *Op. Cit.*, vol. 9, 199.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> Leo XIII, *Apostolic Letter Orientalium Dignitatis on the Churches of the East*.

<http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Leo13/113orient.htm>

<sup>159</sup> V. Gheorghiu, *Christ au Liban: de Moïse aux Palestiniens*, *Op. Cit.*, 140.

a renewal of the ecclesial life.<sup>160</sup> Hence, many traditions and customs that had been lost were reestablished.

The relationship between the Maronite Church and the Holy See has been remarkable within the last three pontificates. During the Lebanese Civil War, the Holy See took several initiatives to bring peace and put an end to the Lebanese conflict. In 1997, the Maronite Church worked actively, being motivated by Pope John Paul II visit to Lebanon and by the *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation A New Hope for Lebanon*.

After the election of the Maronite Patriarch Bechara Boutros Rai, Pope Benedict XVI sent him a letter in which he states: “I wholeheartedly grant to you, venerable Brother, the Ecclesiastical Communion, in conformity with the Tradition and the wishes of the Catholic Church. Being united with the Successor of Peter from the beginning is a cause of pride for your Church.”<sup>161</sup> Furthermore, Patriarch Bechara Boutros Rai- recalling the Maronite-Holy See communion in his first pastoral letter- says:

I visited His Holiness the Pope and the Apostolic See, to tangibly express this ecclesiastical communion... His Holiness affirmed in his statement that this “ecclesiastical communion will originally be expressed in the Divine Liturgy to be held the next day, in the body and blood of Christ beside the tomb of St Peter. There, the complete communion will occur between Apostle’s prince successor and the 77th successor of the first Patriarch John Maron.”... On April 15th, the celebration of the Eucharist in St Peter’s Basilica was held... We shared the body and blood of the Lord, the sacramental communion that gives ecclesiastical communion all its meaning. It is completed between the bishop of Rome and the Patriarch of Antioch on basis of communion with the Christ and His Church... Our Maronite Church Communion with His Holiness the Pope and the Apostolic See is immemorial... This complete communion granted our Church an ecumenical role in our region.<sup>162</sup>

Throughout history, the Maronite-Holy See relation has not been broken although it was marked by some difficulties. It allowed the Maronite Church to introduce modernity in the East and Oriental culture in the West. What this relation could bring to the ecumenical quest for unity will constitute the object of the next chapter.

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<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/document.php?n=1012> (access 10 April 2014).

<sup>162</sup> First Pastoral Letter of Patriarch Bechara Boutros Rai, [English version], n. 31.

### Chapter III: Possible Ecumenical Inferences

“God wills the Church, because he wills unity, and unity is an expression of the whole depth of his *agape*.”<sup>163</sup> Christian unity must have a high priority in the life of all Christians, being “the commandment of the Lord of the Church”.<sup>164</sup> Yet, several problems and challenges need to be overcome, and a good deal remains to be done before Christians reach visible unity.<sup>165</sup> In this chapter we are going to draw possible inferences on the basis of what we have presented in chapter two.

#### 1. Seeking Unity and not Uniformity

Church history shows that there is always the tendency especially during the past centuries to take uniformity for unity. Nevertheless, “progress toward uniformity and sameness, or the totality of a singular Tradition, is not more representative of the Gospel than is progress toward alterity, solidarity, and community amidst difference.”<sup>166</sup>

In our study we observe that historical circumstances led the Catholic Church to stress on uniformity, considering this latter as a potent factor to maintain unity. Rome, at some stages in the history, tried to impose uniformity on the Maronite Church; this was partially successful. Rome’s insistence upon uniformity frustrated the relation between the Maronites and the Holy See and could have led to rupture. The Maronite Church resisted the Latinization and tried to maintain her Eastern Syriac identity without breaking her communion with the Holy See. And Rome, at some point, abandoned the stress on uniformity because she understood the importance of recognizing what is different in the other which is not harmful to unity. Inspired by the Holy Spirit and the framework of the Second Vatican Council, Rome realized the importance of safeguarding the identity and the heritage of each Church. So she let down the *quest for uniformity* for a greater quest, *the quest for unity*. This latter “does not mean uniformity but unity in diversity and diversity in unity”.<sup>167</sup>

Many people think that the Catholic Church is homogenous. As a matter of fact, the Catholic Church has been able to tolerate much diversity, i.e. the difference of rite, liturgy and practices in the Maronite Church and other local Churches. She currently speaks about the necessity of preserving liturgical tradition and ecclesial identity. She is convinced “that

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<sup>163</sup> John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Ut Unum Sint*, *Op. Cit.*, n. 9, 13.

<sup>164</sup> H. Fries and K. Rahner, *Unity of the Churches: an Actual Possibility*, *Op. Cit.*, 1- 5.

<sup>165</sup> [Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, Roman Catholic Church, and the Commission for World Mission and Evangelism, World Council of Churches], *Common Witness: a Study Document of the Joint Working Group of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches*, WCC mission series, n.1, Geneva: WCC, 1984, 7.

<sup>166</sup> D. T. Irvin, *Hearing Many Voices*, *Op. Cit.*, 189.

<sup>167</sup> W. Kasper, “The Decree on Ecumenism-Read Anew After Forty Years,” in: W. Kasper (ed.), *Searching for Christian Unity*, Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 2007, 30.

legitimate diversity is in no way opposed to the Church's unity, but rather enhances her splendour and contributes greatly to the fulfilment of her mission.”<sup>168</sup>

Churches' unity does not mean having a single and uniform institutional entity. It is rather a unity in freedom which is not imposed; a unity of charity that does not require conformity nor enforce uniformity.<sup>169</sup> Hence, insisting on uniformity does not serve the quest for unity; on the contrary it could lead to division. On the other hand, unity was often wrongly represented such as a standardization of all Churches into one. Unity should not be confused with uniformity. It should make room for diversity.<sup>170</sup> Seeking unity in diversity is not an easy task because the temptations to uniformity are ample. But genuine unity must leave room for the ongoing development of different Christian traditions and for the new forms of being the Church which Christianity has brought forth.<sup>171</sup>

In the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Maronite Church there are no more attempts to impose uniformity. This is what Pope John Paul II affirmed to the Maronites and all the Lebanese when he stated: “unity is not to be found in uniformity but in mutual love, in offering one's self and riches, in love that unites all churches together.”<sup>172</sup> Full communion with Rome is maintained while retaining a measure of autonomy for the local Church in many areas. This indeed reflects the fact that Christians share the same faith while having their own identity and differences. The Holy See affirms that within the one Church there is a multiplicity of mentalities, customs, rites, canonical orders, theologies and spiritualities.<sup>173</sup> The same idea was reiterated by Pope Paul VI when he stated that the Catholic Church embraces in high esteem the “liturgical rites, ecclesiastical traditions... of the Christian life of the Eastern Churches, for in them, distinguished as they are for their venerable antiquity, there remains conspicuous the tradition... that forms part of the... heritage of the universal Church.”<sup>174</sup>

The fear of uniformity has impeded Christians in their quest for unity. Some are afraid to be engaged in discussions about unity and understand Christian unity as something kept for the future because the experience made in the past was a bitter one. What is needed is a clear distinction between unity and uniformity. Being united does not mean being uniform and seeking visible unity does not and should not lead to uniformity. Fortunately, what we have found in our study is coherent with the vision of the ecumenical movement and confirms it. In the ecumenical movement, there is rather openness to diversity than a stress on uniformity. The ecumenical

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<sup>168</sup> John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Ut Unum Sint*, *Op. Cit.*, n. 50, 57.

<sup>169</sup> A. Bea, *L'Unité dans la Liberté*, Paris: Fayard, [1966], 94.

<sup>170</sup> W. Kasper, “Concluding Observations,” in: W. Kasper (ed.), *Searching for Christian Unity*, *Op. Cit.*, 214.

<sup>171</sup> *Id.*, Preface.

<sup>172</sup> John Paul II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation A New Hope for Lebanon*, *Op. Cit.*, n. 21.

<sup>173</sup> *Unitatis Redintegratio*, *Op. Cit.*, n. 4, 16.

<sup>174</sup> Paul VI, *Decree on the Catholic Churches of the Eastern Rite Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, n. 1.

efforts respect diversity and “aim not at a drab uniformity but at a type of relationship which will maximize both unity and diversity.”<sup>175</sup>

## 2. Setting Limits to Diversity

Diversity is essential for the well-being and prosperity of the Church. It is a gift from God which “reflects both the diversities of the gifts of the Spirit in the one body and diversities of creation by the one Creator”.<sup>176</sup> But “unity is theologically prior to diversity”.<sup>177</sup> To achieve unity there is a need for a guided diversity. In the ecumenical movement today, a closer look into the encounters between Churches, discussions and agreed statements shows clearly that diversity is so privileged. Yet the question is that of where the ecumenical movement will end up if diversity continues. And the challenge becomes to discern how far diversity can go without endangering unity. There are strong factors which enable us to say that limits to diversity are needed in the search of unity, namely the concrete situation of the Churches’ expansion around the world today.

As our study has revealed, communion between Rome and the Maronite Church has been maintained although the Maronites exercise considerable autonomy. Maronites have their own patriarchate with its synodal system. They elect their own Patriarch and bishops, and continue to follow their distinctive Eastern rite derived from the ancient Syriac tradition of Antioch. They also have their own spiritual heritage; their special liturgical tradition which has common points with the Roman rite but also differences. An example of the distinction is the status of clergy; Maronite priests are usually married.<sup>178</sup> At the same time, Maronites affirm the spiritual primacy of the Pope. We can conclude that this relationship is founded on unity in diversity.

Though diversity was finally recognized by Rome as a source of richness to the Church, there are clear limits to this diversity in the communion between the Maronite Church and the Holy See. Such diversity does not harm unity nor damage the oneness of faith;<sup>179</sup> rather “it manifests it, for it is the mind of the Catholic Church that each individual Church or Rite should retain its traditions...”<sup>180</sup> Full communion of the Maronites with Rome includes unity in the faith, the sacraments, the ministry and the teaching. Fundamental bases are similar, but the expression in the life of the Church is different.

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<sup>175</sup> J. MacQuarrie, *Christian Unity and Christian Diversity*, *Op. Cit.*, 108.

<sup>176</sup> L. Vischer, *A Documentary History of the Faith and Order Movement 1927-1963*, St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1963, 136.

<sup>177</sup> O. Tjørhom, “The Goal of Visible Unity: Reaffirming our Commitment,” in: *The Ecumenical Review*, vol. 54.1, January-April 2002, 167.

<sup>178</sup> Cf. C. A. Kimball, *Angle of Vision: Christians and the Middle East*, *Op. Cit.*, 32, 34; V. Gheorghiu, *Christ au Liban: de Moïse aux Palestiniens*, *Op. Cit.*, 138.

<sup>179</sup> John Paul II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation A New Hope for Lebanon*, *Op. Cit.*, n. 21.

<sup>180</sup> Paul VI, *Decree on the Catholic Churches of the Eastern Rite Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, *Op. Cit.*, n. 2.



Diversity within the Church is to be prized. But it should be contained whenever it is not at the service of unity. As Schlink says: “the most important and decisive reason for the various limitations of the diversity possible within unity is the concern to maintain the distinction between truth and error, between the Church and the pseudo-church...”<sup>181</sup> So, diversity within a unity of communion is to be encouraged and maintained but divisions to be avoided.

The ecumenical movement- in several statements and occasions- mentioned the importance of putting limits to diversity although it is still not clear enough what those limits might be. Diversity in the Church will continue if not increase in the future. It should be perceived as richness within Christianity as long as it does not put Christian unity at stake. Thus, discernment of what must be retained and what must be let go is required to sustain diversity and to safeguard the quest for unity against all kind of diversity that destroys visible unity.<sup>182</sup> The Church should allow diversity “and seek to shape it in a constructive way, not try to suppress it”.<sup>183</sup> A good discernment helps to clarify and keep what is essential for the Churches to be united, and let down what is secondary for the sake of visible unity.

Diversity remains the risk of ecumenical life today and the challenge for the ecumenical future.<sup>184</sup> Cardinal Kasper notes that the unity “we strive for is more than a network of church denominations which mutually recognize one another by establishing altar and pulpit fellowship.”<sup>185</sup> In any case, diversity should not be considered “as an endorsement of parochial identities, but as something which creates the ‘space’ required for sharing our diverse gifts with each other within the framework of communion. For true and sustainable diversity is always taken up into the service of unity...”<sup>186</sup>

The Churches need a way forward that will increase visible unity, allow scope for diversity and respect the integrity and autonomy of each tradition. Though, in view of the diversity of Churches within the diversity of nations, traditions and cultures, “a sheer diversity would dissipate the church and cause her to disappear.”<sup>187</sup> At any rate, reflecting on how much diversity can be maintained among Churches without disrupting visible unity should be a future priority for the ecumenical movement.

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<sup>181</sup> E. Schlink, “The Unity and Diversity of the Church,” in: R. Groscurth (ed.), *What Unity Implies: Six Essays After Uppsala*, World Council of Churches Studies n. 7, Geneva: WCC, 1969, 34.

<sup>182</sup> J. Morris and N. Sagovsky (eds.), *The Unity we Have and the Unity we Seek*, *Op. Cit.*, 186- 187.

<sup>183</sup> W. Kasper, *That they May All be One: the Call to Unity*, London; New York: Burns & Oates, 2004, 188.

<sup>184</sup> D. T. Irvin, *Hearing Many Voices*, *Op. Cit.*, 197.

<sup>185</sup> Walter Kasper, “The Decree on Ecumenism-Read Anew After Forty Years” in: W. Kasper (ed.), *Searching for Christian Unity*, *Op. Cit.*, 30.

<sup>186</sup> O. Tjørhom, “The Goal of Visible Unity: Reaffirming our Commitment,” in: *The Ecumenical Review*, *Op. Cit.*, 169.

<sup>187</sup> J. MacQuarrie, *Christian Unity and Christian Diversity*, *Op. Cit.*, 7.

### 3. Reinforcement of Reception

Reception “in its explicit theological meaning, derived from the biblical of (*apo*)*lambanein* and (*apo*)*dechesthai* (receive, welcome), points to one of the main characteristics of faith itself.”<sup>188</sup> Within the ecumenical movement, reception “operates under the Spirit”<sup>189</sup> and goes beyond the “process of legitimation” of the results of ecumenical dialogues alone; it entails testing and appropriating such results in the life of the Churches.<sup>190</sup>

According to the *Eighth Report* of the Joint Working Group (JWG) between the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, the concept of *reception* “encompasses not only the reception of ecumenical dialogue but the broader process by which churches can receive elements, such as liturgy, spirituality and forms of witness from one another’s traditions, and even the totality of the process by which churches may receive one another in full communion.”<sup>191</sup> Churches are important “agents of ecumenical reception”;<sup>192</sup> they have the final choice to receive ecumenical agreements.<sup>193</sup> Through reception, Churches appropriate the convergences, the agreements and the results of all their encounters with one another;<sup>194</sup> and consequently they are renewed in their lives and mission.<sup>195</sup>

From our study in the previous chapter, we notice that *reception*- though it was not known or mentioned as such- played a crucial role in the relation between the Maronites and the Holy See. In fact, the communication between both was primary based on the exchange of letters because at that time, direct contact was difficult and sometimes impossible to achieve, and no modern ways of communication were available. Most of the time, when the Maronite Church got the Holy See recommendations, she apprehended them and looked after their reception. This is also true for all the Catholic councils’ decisions and decrees to which the Maronite Church witnessed real engagement.

Today, reception poses a challenge for the ecumenical movement, being possible “only when all elements of the churches act in harmony”<sup>196</sup> and such harmony is difficult to achieve. Another difficulty is that reception requires “reconceptualization of some fundamental views”.<sup>197</sup> Furthermore, the progress in the reception of the fruits of ecumenical engagements- statements

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<sup>188</sup> A. Houtepen, “Reception,” in: N. Lossky *et al.* (eds.), *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, *Op. Cit.*, 959.

<sup>189</sup> W. G. Rusch, *Ecumenical Reception: its Challenges and Opportunity*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007, 71.

<sup>190</sup> A. Houtepen, “Reception,” in: N. Lossky *et al.* (eds.), *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, *Op. Cit.*, 959.

<sup>191</sup> *Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches Eighth Report 1999-2005: Geneva-Rome 2005*, Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005, 43.

<sup>192</sup> W. G. Rusch, *Ecumenical Reception: its Challenges and Opportunity*, *Op. Cit.*, 63.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> *Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches Ninth Report 2007-2012: Receiving One Another in the Name of Christ*, Geneva : WCC Publications, 2013, 82.

<sup>195</sup> *Id.*, 47.

<sup>196</sup> W. G. Rusch, *Ecumenical Reception: its Challenges and Opportunity*, *Op. Cit.*, 67.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

from conferences, dialogues and assemblies, reports, convergence texts, etc.- is sluggish. And this is felt within the ecumenical movement. In the search for unity, the framework of theologians and representatives of the Churches is important, but even more vital is the reception in the life of the Churches.<sup>198</sup> Hence, the commitment and engagement of the Churches to reception should be fostered and reception within the ecumenical movement needs to be improved in the coming years.

#### 4. Openness to Spiritual Ecumenism

Spiritual ecumenism is defined by the Catholic Church as “the heart of ecumenism”.<sup>199</sup> It means interior conversion, a change of heart, prayer, love, self-denial, humility, patience, renewal and reform of the Church, etc.<sup>200</sup>

Even though the concept of *spiritual ecumenism* was not yet launched when the relation between Rome and the Maronites started, the Maronite-Holy See relationship reveals fundamental elements which refer to spiritual ecumenism. An element that we bring out and which is essential for ecumenism is *prayer*. Cardinal Kasper states that spiritual ecumenism is “carried out in faithful obedience to the Father, following the will of Christ, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit... It finds its expression in *public and private prayer for the unity of Christians*.”<sup>201</sup>

We suppose that prayer helped the Maronites in time of difficulties. We also presume that mutual prayer contributed to maintain the communion between Maronites and the Holy See despite isolation and persecution. Today, some would think that prayer for unity is worthless. But “since unity is a gift, it is fitting that Christians pray for it together”;<sup>202</sup> also divisions among Christians lasted for so long that reconciliation seems beyond human measures. Cardinal Bea affirms that prayer “is a means which enables all the faithful to contribute towards unity”.<sup>203</sup> Prayer gives strength to overcome all the difficulties which delay the realization of the ecumenical goal. As the general secretary of the WCC, Olav Fykse Tveit states: “The quest for unity in the church has to be a prayer... [It] is always done in the light of the resurrected Christ, who reunites those who were divided by sin, failure, evil and death, reunited by life and love, without revenge.”<sup>204</sup> In this sense Christians “are called to a greater fervor in prayer to make the

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<sup>198</sup> E. R. Falardeau, *That All May Be One*, New York: Paulist Press, 2000, 3; [WCC], *Reflections on Ecumenism in the 21st Century*, Geneva: WCC, 2004, 78.

<sup>199</sup> *Unitatis Redintegratio*, *Op. Cit.*, n. 8.

<sup>200</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Ut Unum Sint*, *Op. Cit.*, n.15, 21- 27; *Unitatis Redintegratio*, *Op. Cit.*, n. 5- 8.

<sup>201</sup> W. Kasper, *A Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism*, Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 2007, 12.

<sup>202</sup> *Id.*, 10.

<sup>203</sup> A. Bea, *The Unity of Christians*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1963, 35.

<sup>204</sup> O. F. Tveit, “Unity: A Call to Be Strong or Humble,” in: *The Ecumenical Review*, vol. 65.2, July 2013, 173.

will that is dear to the Lord's heart come true."<sup>205</sup> Also, the week of prayer within the ecumenical movement should be reinforced, being a time of hope and progress towards unity.

The Maronite-Holy See experience also shows how Rome was suspicious about the faith of the Maronites. Rome sent legates to investigate Maronites' religious practice in order to insure that they did not deviate from the orthodoxy. Among Churches, there are also suspicion, bitter memories, prejudices and stereotypes. Brooding over painful memories of the past will only perpetuate conflicts. Christians must be willing to change. They are called to move as far as possible out of the inherited patterns of suspicion to progress faster in their quest for unity. Spiritual ecumenism helps them to overcome suspicion. It creates an atmosphere of mutual trust and esteem, and paves the way for visible unity.

Maronite Church underlined difficult times, i.e. persecution from Muslims and other Christians, imposition of uniformity by Rome and the act of burning books related to her heritage with the interference of Rome in her interior ecclesiastical affairs. Maronites were able to forgive, to overcome the hurts, to heal the memories and remain in communion with the Holy See. Also when Rome became aware of the wrong she had done, she redressed the mistakes of the past.

In the relationship between Churches, being able to forgive and ask forgiveness is a hard task but a necessary one to achieve unity. With love and an interior conversion, forgiveness and healing become possible. Also, openness towards the other and healing the wounds left by history are necessary to make headway in the ecumenical encounters and build relationships based on trust and respect, without prejudices or fear. The task is hard and requires humility, genuine *metanoia* and conversion, for there is no ecumenism without conversion.<sup>206</sup> And it is the Holy Spirit who leads to the conversion that will enable the Church to better continue her journey with a new vitality, in a spirit of reconciliation and communion.<sup>207</sup>

Finally, spiritual ecumenism which seeks out life and serves life<sup>208</sup> is one of the ways to move towards visible unity in the midst of Churches' diversity. And the ecumenical movement should be more creative in encouraging the Churches to become more committed to spiritual ecumenism as long as they are committed to the quest for Christian unity.

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<sup>205</sup> John Paul II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation A New Hope for Lebanon*, *Op. Cit.*, n. 12.

<sup>206</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Ut Unum Sint*, *Op. Cit.*, n. 34; *Unitatis Redintegratio*, *Op. Cit.*, n. 7.

<sup>207</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation A New Hope for Lebanon*, *Op. Cit.*, n. 24.

<sup>208</sup> W. Kasper, *That they May All be One: the Call to Unity*, *Op. Cit.*, 163.

## Conclusion

“To believe in Christ means to desire unity”,<sup>209</sup> seek it, pray and work for it. Visible unity has always been the goal of the ecumenical movement and progress has been made in the last two decades. Nevertheless, there is still more to be done.

Throughout this thesis- which is not exhaustive- we had one overriding concern: drawing from the Maronite-Holy See relationship possible inferences that may be useful for moving forward in the search of unity. It may appear an “easy case” looking at the communion between the Maronite Church and the Holy See but we were convinced that such a study could yield good fruits that will go a long way in promoting Christian unity.

Our historical survey of the Maronite-Holy See relationship led us to some interesting conclusions. These latter are not only important for the ecumenical movement, but also for any Church (including the Maronite Church) to improve its life and mission. Our contention is that the search of unity should not be seen as an attempt to establish uniformity. It has to respect the diversity of the Churches, bearing in mind that there is also a need to define some limits to diversity in unity. The quest for unity could also be improved once greater attention is given to the ecumenical reception and spiritual ecumenism within the ecumenical movement.

However, in this line of thought some questions emerge and require to be addressed. *What* are the limits of diversity? And *who* decides which diversities are legitimate? *How* could spiritual ecumenism and reception be reinforced within the ecumenical movement? These questions and others could be the subject for further studies and researches.

While approaching the end of the second millennium, Churches led by the Holy Spirit are called to learn from the past, grab the opportunities of the present and move ahead in the quest for unity. What they need is a continuing conversion, more confident prayer, openness to each other and to the Holy Spirit, and last but not least hope; “*and hope does not disappoint*” (Rom 5:5). By following this way Churches will pave the way to visible unity. During this journey, Christians are called to keep faith that unity, which is God’s will and gift, will be realized through their continuing prayers and efforts because Jesus prayed “*that they may all be one*” (John 17:21).

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<sup>209</sup> John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Ut Unum Sint, Op. Cit.*, n. 9.

## Appendix 1

### Extrait de la Lettre du Patriarche Moussa Akkârî au Pape Paul III (1532)<sup>210</sup>

“Que cette lettre parvienne, s’il plaît à Dieu, à la ville magnifique de Rome, aux mains du Saint Père le Pape Paul III.

...Nous lui demandons de nous accorder, par sa grâce, une bénédiction apostolique sur notre pauvreté, (cette grâce) qui procède du Siège apostolique où nous recevons bénédiction et grande allégresse, et consolation spirituelle et corporelle, en vertu desquelles nous recevons les biens éternels et infinis.

Il est vrai que, dans notre pauvreté, nous sommes soumis chaque jour à l’assujettissement qui recouvre continuellement nos esprits, lequel assujettissement provient du peuple mauvais que sont les païens qui nous entourent par mer et par terre, qui pèsent sur toutes nos forces et notre vaillance et obscurcissent nos yeux par la quantité de misères et de vexations que nous en subissons avec une grande amertume, sans repos ni cesse.

Et malgré cela, sans la moindre négligence, nous remercions le Seigneur Dieu tout-puissant... Quant à nous, nous sommes unis au Siège Apostolique par la foi catholique, comme ont pu le constater en ce qui nous concerne les commissaires du Saint Père le Pape Léon X et ses autres devanciers...

C’est pour cela que nous avons adressé à V.S., ô Père plein de pitié, notre requête par l’intermédiaire de notre frère, commissaire et procureur du R. Père Gardien du Mont-Sion, le frère Félix de Venise de l’ordre de S. François... Il aura pour mission de vous annoncer, Saint Père notre Pape, nos affaires publiques et secrètes... Il est vrai que depuis le temps de notre Saint Père Léon X, nous n’avons plus reçu de visiteurs.

Nous supplions donc V.S. de daigner nous envoyer, pour l’amour de Dieu, un visiteur qui nous examine spirituellement et corporellement, comme le fit jadis le Pontife Suprême susnommé, le Pape Léon X. Ce sera pour nous un grand don de la part de V.S. parce que nous sommes soumis à V.S., au Saint-Siège Apostolique et à l’Eglise romaine. Et lorsque V.S. enverra son représentant pour tout connaître, il sera démontré à V.S. et aux Seigneurs cardinaux et au monde entier combien nous sommes de vrais catholiques, obéissants envers la Sainte Mère Eglise, et nous en serons de vrais sujets jusqu’à notre fin... »

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<sup>210</sup> Quoted by Y. Moubarac in: *Pentalogie Antiochienne, Domaine Maronite, Op. Cit.*, 504- 505.

### **Lettre du Pape Calixte III (1455)<sup>211</sup>**

“Au Vénérable Frère, Pierre, Patriarche des Maronites, Salut et Bénédiction Apostolique :

Nous avons reçu, ô Frère, votre dernière lettre que nous a présentée, en Votre nom, Notre cher fils, votre délégué, Abraham du Mont-Liban: nous en avons entendu le contenu avec joie et satisfaction, tout en vous remerciant de la bonne intention que vous avez de propager la Foi chrétienne et de la conserver; de même Nous avons vu que vous êtes très attentif à tout ce qui regarde la gloire de Dieu et le salut des âmes. Nous louons votre dévotion et Nous vous exhortons de toute notre âme et de tout notre cœur à persévérer dans cette intention et à vous mettre à exhorter les autres à la persévérance, vous confiant en le Seigneur qui couronne les bonnes actions et qui n’abandonne point ceux qui mettent leur confiance en Lui. Quant à tout ce que vous Nous avez demandé, nous le ferons avec plaisir et Nous vous en informerons en temps opportun.

Ecrit l’an mille quatre cent cinquante-cinq de l’Incarnation Divine, le quatorze du mois de juin, la première de Notre Pontificat. »

### **Extrait de l’Allocution du Pape Benoît XIV au consistoire du 13 juillet 1744<sup>212</sup>**

“Vous savez déjà, Vénérables Frères, qu’avec le secours du Dieu Tout-Puissant, l’élection du patriarche d’Antioche a été achevée très pacifiquement... Nos brefs apostoliques ont été reçus avec une grande vénération, et leurs dispositions exécutées... Nous avons aussi de grandes louanges à donner aux archevêques et aux prélats Maronites, ainsi qu’à toute la nation; Nous souscrivons volontiers pour notre part aux magnifiques éloges que les Pontifes Romains nos prédécesseurs lui ont accordées à l’envi. Pie IV, dans des lettres apostoliques, affirme que les milliers d’hommes dont se compose cette nation, sont autant de milliers qui n’ont jamais adoré Baal, et que, quoique environnés d’hérétiques et de schismatiques, ils sont restés constamment attachés à la foi chrétienne et à la religion catholique. Clément VIII a confirmé ce témoignage, en ajoutant que les Maronites se sont toujours montrés pleins d’obéissance pour l’Eglise Romaine... Paul V compare les Maronites à des roses... Urbain VIII assure également dans ses lettres apostoliques, que la beauté du Carmel ne s’est pas effacée, et que la gloire du Liban ne s’est pas éteinte, puisque le patriarche, les évêques et les prêtres Maronites vénèrent dans le Siège apostolique et le Pontife Romain, l’autorité de St. Pierre. Enfin Clément XI, dans des Brefs qui ont été publiés, a rassemblé en faveur des Maronites beaucoup de choses semblables et d’autres encore.

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<sup>211</sup> *Id.*, 494- 495.

<sup>212</sup> *Id.*, 498- 499.

Les Maronites usent d'un rit [sic] approuvé par le Saint Siège, et qui se rapproche beaucoup du rit [sic] romain: ils célèbrent avec du pain azyme, et non avec du pain fermenté, se servent d'habits sacrés semblables à ceux en usage dans l'Eglise Romaine, disent des messes privées et en disent plusieurs le même jour sur le même autel... enfin chez eux les évêques seuls confèrent le sacrement de confirmation, et le nouveau calendrier grégorien est en usage dans leur Eglise. Leurs cérémonies et leurs rites [sic] sont tirés de l'ancien rituel syriaque, comme Pierre, patriarche des Maronites, l'a dit à Léon X, et comme il est expliqué dans le dernier Synode du Liban, approuvé par le Saint Siège. »



## Appendix 2

### Extract from the letter of Gabriel Ibn al-Qela'I to Patriarch Simon of Hadeth (1494)<sup>213</sup>

“One cannot object that this custom is an innovation, invented by me. There are more than fifteen papal letters bearing their seals which give testimony and which are preserved in the archives of our Monastery. They contain professions of faith going back more than 282 years. Your own profession of faith is found in Rome where it was brought by Gryphon and the Brothers Alexander and Simon. Father John, Superior of Beyrouth, delegated by your Patriarch John Al-Gagi, has done the same at the Council of Florence, and before him Aimeric of the Brothers Preachers and Cardinal William, legate of the Pope to your people. The leaders of the clergy and of the nation, the Patriarch, at that time Gregory of Halat (first half of the twelfth century), met in his presence: all swore in writing to remain always attached to the See of Rome. When King Godfrey had taken Jerusalem, he sent this news to Rome. His ambassadors were joined by envoys of the Patriarch Joseph Al-Gargasi, and they brought back a cross and miter. From the time of Queen Constance (wife of Robert, king of Sicily), one began the use of bells in Lebanon, according to the way of the Western Church: up to that time they had used wood for the calling to the hours of the Office as the Greeks do. When this princess bought the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem, the Tomb of Mary, the Mount of Olives and the Sanctuary of Bethlehem for 80,000 dinars, she gave to the Maronites the Grotto of the Cross and many altars in other churches in the Holy City, permitting them to celebrate on the altars of the Franks using their articles, adding besides pontifical confirmation to all their privileges. In a meeting of Maronites held in Jerusalem, all committed themselves solemnly to remain closely united to the Roman communion...”

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<sup>213</sup> Quoted by P. Dib in: *History of the Maronite Church, Op. Cit.*, 59.

### Appendix 3

#### **Extract from the letter of Pope Innocent III to the Maronites<sup>214</sup>**

“Having seen that you were lacking in certain things, the Cardinal took care to supplement them by the fullness of his apostolic authority in ordering you... to use at Baptism the form which consists in triple immersion but one invocation of the Trinity; to have bishops alone administer the sacrament of Confirmation; not to use any substance other than balsam and oil in the preparation of chrism... Being obedient sons you have accepted all these things with humility and submission. Approving these prescriptions and ordering that they be inviolably observed, we take you, Brothers and Sons... with the churches constituted in your provinces, under the protection of the Blessed Peter and ourselves... and we decree that the prelates located in the Maronite territories wear the vestments and the insignia that are proper to them, according to the manner of the Latins, and conforming in all things and with more care to the customs of the Roman Church.”

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<sup>214</sup> *Id.*, 62- 63.

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*Sr. Dominga Khalil Khalil*

Bogis-Bossey, 1st June 2014