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Towards a Common Christology*

Michael Ellnemyr's description of the theological dialogue between the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches as "the most important challenge of the New Millennium" struck an immediate and enthusiastic response with me. As the bishop of what is essentially a missionary diocese of the Coptic Orthodox Church, I am primarily concerned to present the Orthodox faith in all its fullness to British people; yet I am profoundly conscious that the multiplicity of jurisdictions and mutual misunderstanding among our two families may confuse rather than edify, encourage rivalry rather than cooperation and – in the end – deprive my fellow countrymen of the opportunity to return to their spiritual roots by embracing Christianity in the totality of its Apostolic Tradition.

There is an historical precedent for my concern - when Pope Gregory the Great sent Augustine of Canterbury to evangelise the English in 597. Although large portions of the British Isles had been occupied by the pagan Angles and Saxons, a local British Church still existed, with its own hierarchy rooted in flourishing monasteries and boasting a long tradition of saints and martyrs. Cut off from the Roman Empire by the collapse of imperial rule in Britain; the disintegration of centralised government into warring petty principalities; the steady influx of alien, pagan predators and the gradual abandonment of cities in favour of remote rural settlements, the local British Church was weakened and out of touch with the religious priorities of the previous century and a half. Yet these trials had also served to purify the British Church and, at precisely the time when Augustine arrives, we detect a renewal and spiritual vibrancy which no longer flees from the pagan invaders, but reaches out to bring the Faith to them.

Yet, those small differences (an antiquated form of the tonsure, an older means of calculating the date of Holy Pascha and liturgical variances)

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led to Augustine's mission regarding them with suspicion. Demanding compliance with contemporary usages and requiring submission to a Roman primacy which they had never known, the British Church was stigmatised as schismatic, its apostolic succession rejected and ultimately its last remnants isolated to remote places to face extinction. Undoubtedly the scandal of division between two churches sharing a common faith, delayed the re-evangelisation of the British Isles and lost souls who might otherwise have been brought to Christ.¹

It is my fear that our present position, if it remains unresolved, will parallel what happened in the past. The philosopher Hegel warned that what history and experience teach is that people and governments have never learned anything from history or acted on principles deduced from it. I earnestly hope we may prove him wrong.

What has been achieved?

The unofficial dialogue between our two families, which started some 41 years ago and prepared the way for the official dialogue in 1985, has already achieved a great deal but we now need to build on and positively amplify the *Second Agreed Statement* of 1990

[...] we have now clearly understood that both families have always loyally maintained the same authentic Orthodox Christological faith, and the unbroken continuity of the apostolic tradition, though they have used Christological terms in different ways. It is this common faith and continuous loyalty to the Apostolic Tradition that should be the basis for our unity and communion.²

It is the shared understanding of that "same authentic Christological faith" that we mean by a "common Christology", not some new Christology, nor a diminished Christology which arises from compromise.

The *Second Agreed Statement* briefly describes the substance of Orthodox Christology. Of course this Statement has been criticised for lacking detail in this description, and requiring a greater precision to exclude any possibility of confusion or misunderstanding. However, even taken as a stage in the development of a Common Christology, it is certainly clear

that it describes the traditional and historic Oriental Orthodox Christology, and there is nothing within it which cannot be found in the documents of the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

The *Second Agreed Statement* requires, in the first place, the condemnation of Eutyches, and the confession of the double consubstantiality of the Word, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Eutyches of course rejected the consubstantiality of the humanity of Christ with us. Leaving aside the historical circumstances of the Second Council of Ephesus in 449, it is clear that the Oriental Orthodox have never agreed with Eutyches. Indeed our own tradition considers that though he gave the appearance of having confessed the consubstantiality of the humanity of the Word with us, in fact he persisted in his error and was universally condemned.

Pope Dioscorus³ himself stated at Chalcedon,

If Eutyches holds notions disallowed by the doctrines of the church, he deserves not only punishment but even fire: but my concern is for the Catholic and apostolic faith, not for any man whomsoever.

Severus of Antioch⁴ discusses this matter, writing,

Since you have thought fit to ask me for what reason Eutyches is anathematized, the man of ill name and impious, and how it is that he was received by Dioscorus of saintly memory, we say in a few words that he was received on presenting a document which contained a right confession of faith and anathematized Mani and Valentine, and Apollinaris, and those who say that the flesh of our Lord and God Jesus Christ came down from heaven [- -]. But the man of ill name seems again to have “returned to his vomit”.⁵

However, there is an English saying “Mud sticks” and from both the malicious and the less well-informed it is still possible to find Dioscorus’ name linked to Eutyches as both being Monophysites.⁶ The late Father John Romanides⁷ observes,

The backbone of the Orthodox tradition is the fact that the Logos became consubstantial with us. There can be no doubt that Dioscorus agrees with this fact and so could never be accused of being a Monophysite along with Eutyches.⁸

Dioscorus's successor, Pope Timothy⁹, wrote more determinedly against those he found teaching Eutychianism, than against Chalcedon and the *Tome* of Leo. He addressed a letter to the Christians in Constantinople anathematising two clergy, who were propagating a Eutychianist Christology,

I have written this upon hearing that certain persons are opposed to obeying the tradition of the holy fathers who taught Christ's fleshly consubstantiality with us. Such persons the fathers also anathematized.¹⁰

He also provides reference to a letter written by Pope Dioscorus, which makes clear that he was also resolutely opposed to those who refused to confess the consubstantiality of the humanity of the incarnate Word with us. The reference says,

Our father, the blessed Archbishop Dioscorus, confessor of the orthodox faith, in agreement with the holy apostles excommunicated a number of people who held evil doctrines like these, and anathematised them together with the rest of the heretics.¹¹

Philoxenus of Mabbug¹² says,

I also say anathema to Eutyches the heretic, and to his followers, because he denies that there was a real embodiment of God from the Virgin, and regards as hallucinations the mysteries of His corporeity.¹³

Also Patriarch Anthimus of Constantinople¹⁴ writes to Severus of Antioch saying,

I also anathematise the deviations from the truth which have been made by both sides, and the impious and erring men who went before them as their leaders (I refer to Valentine and Marcion and Arius and Macedonius and Eunomius and Apollinaris and Eutyches) [- -].¹⁵

It is quite clear that Eutyches is universally condemned and anathematised by the Oriental Orthodox, and always has been, even from the very earliest period. A more recent statement by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III demonstrates a continuous and consistent witness,

Eutyches [- -] zealously opposed the Nestorian heresy, and was so highly concerned about the unity of the two natures in Christ, which Nestorius tore apart, that he fell into another heresy. Eutyches said that the human nature was absorbed and dissolved in the Divine nature as a drop of vinegar in the ocean. In this way, he denied the human nature of Christ.

After St. Dioscorus had excommunicated him, Eutyches pretended that he repented and accepted the true faith and St. Dioscorus allowed him to return on the condition that he would refute his heresy. Later on however, he again declared his corrupt belief and was condemned by the Council of Chalcedon held in 451 AD, and was also excommunicated by the Coptic Church.¹⁶

Of course it is not only required that Eutyches be condemned. The doctrine of the consubstantiality of the humanity of the incarnate Word with us, save sin, is also positively required.

Pope Dioscorus wrote the following words from his exile at Gangra,

I declare, that no man shall say that the holy flesh, which our Lord took from the Virgin Mary, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, in a manner which He Himself knows, was different to and foreign from our body. [- -] And again, 'It was right that in everything He should be made like unto His brethren,' and that word 'in everything' does not suffer the subtraction of any part of our nature: since in nerves, and hair, and bones, and veins, and belly, and heart, and kidneys, and liver, and lungs, and, in short, in all those things that belong to our nature.

For He was like us, for us, and with us, not in phantasy, nor in mere semblance, according to the heresy of the Manichaeans, but rather in actual reality from Mary, the Theotokos. This I think and believe; and, if any man does not think thus, he is a stranger to the faith of the apostles.¹⁷

Then Pope Timothy wrote a few years later saying,

For we believe, in accordance with the tradition of the fathers, that our Lord Jesus Christ was consubstantial in flesh with us. Our Lord Jesus Christ is one with the flesh and one with his own flesh [- -]. This expression, 'like us in everything' counsels all of us, who wish to live and enjoy eternal benefits, to confess that our Lord Jesus Christ's flesh is derived from Mary the holy

Virgin and Mother of God, because he was consubstantial in the flesh with her and with us, he who is consubstantial in his Godhead with the Father.¹⁸

As a final example, we may refer to the letter of Patriarch Theodosius¹⁹ of Alexandria to Anthimus of Constantinople, which says,

I confess that God the Word, of the nature of the eternal Father, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, became incarnate and also became man by the Holy Spirit and of Mary the ever-virgin, in flesh endowed with a soul and an intellect after our nature, and was made like unto us in everything except sin.²⁰

Although the *Second Agreed Statement* addresses a number of other issues, this is not the occasion to examine each one; but just as the first subject can be confirmed from the writings of the Oriental Orthodox fathers, so the same can be shown for all these other matters.

The confession of faith of Anthimus, from the 6th century, seems to me to embrace most of these other points, and seems to bear witness, even in its brief compass, to the Orthodox Christology which is described in the Statement. It may well be useful to use it here as a witness to the commonality of Christology between the Oriental Orthodox tradition and that of the Eastern Orthodox tradition as far as it is authentically described in the *Second Agreed Statement*.

I confess that God the Word, the only Son, who was begotten of the Father in eternity, through whom all things were made, Light of Light, living image of the Father and sharing His nature, in the last times became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and of Mary the Virgin, and became a man perfectly without variation and confusion, in everything like unto us except sin; and He remained God immutable, and, when He assumed our attributes, He was not diminished in His Godhead; and that which was derived from us He made His own by dispensation by a natural union.

For He who was begotten without time and without a body of God the Father, the same underwent a second birth in flesh, inasmuch as in an ineffable manner He became incarnate of a virgin mother; and, after she had borne Him, she continued in her virginity; and we justly confess her to be

the Theotokos, and that He who was born of her in the flesh is perfect God and perfect man, the same out of two natures one Son, one Lord, and one Christ, and one nature of God the Word who became incarnate; and each one of the natures which combined to form an indivisible unity remained without confusion.

And so He is very rightly one of the holy and connatural Trinity, both before He took flesh and after He took flesh, and a fourth number was not added to the Trinity; and He is impassible in that He is of the nature of the Father, but passible in the flesh in that He is of our nature. For God the Word did not suffer in His own nature, but in flesh of our nature; and He who personally united this to Himself suffered in our likeness. And Gregory the Theologian defined the matter and called Him impassible in His Godhead, passible in the assumption of flesh. And He is one in the miracles, and also in the passions, and by dispensation He made our passions His own, voluntary and innocent ones, in flesh which was passible and mortal after our nature, endowed with a soul and an intellect, and passible and mortal all the time of the dispensation; for He suffered not in semblance but in reality, and in flesh that was capable of suffering He suffered and died on the cross; and by a Resurrection befitting God He made and rendered it impassible and immortal, and in every way incorruptible, since it came from the union of the womb, which was holy and without sin.

While recognising, therefore, the distinction between the elements which have combined to form the unity of nature, I mean between the Godhead and the manhood, we yet do not separate them from one another; also we do not cut the One into or in two natures, nor yet do we confound Him by rejecting the distinction between the Godhead and the manhood, but we confess Him to be one out of two, Emmanuel.²¹

A Dialogue with the deaf ?

The fact that most of the synods of the Oriental Orthodox Churches have received the *Second Agreed Statement*, and that even as a provisional and introductory statement it does appear to conform to the substance of the Oriental Orthodox Christological tradition, is something entirely positive.

Equally, there has been a significant and positive response from Eastern Orthodox both within the dialogue and at large. Yet we must be careful not to be too complacent about the problems yet to be surmounted. It is necessary to face the fact that there is a vociferous and polemical voice which rejects the *Second Agreed Statement*, especially, but not exclusively, from within the Eastern Orthodox community.

Although balanced, updated books and articles on the various Oriental Orthodox churches have appeared in recent years – not least from the indefatigable Christine Chaillot and her Inter-Orthodox Dialogue Association – there are still too many writers who negligently refer to ‘Monophysites’ and recycle inaccurate and outdated opinions of earlier writers. Either because they don’t themselves fully comprehend precise theological definitions or because they consider them irrelevant in the twenty-first century.

Worst still, however, are those intransigent polemicists who absolutely refuse to engage in meaningful dialogue, preferring instead to denounce all Oriental Orthodox as unredeemed heretics and to stigmatise those who confer with us as betrayers of Orthodoxy. Doubtless they achieve some self-satisfaction but there is no endeavour to understand or communicate. In a dialogue with the deaf one is left talking with oneself!

Even as recently as September 2004 the School of Pastoral Theology at the Aristotelian University in Thessaloniki, sponsored a five-day Inter-Orthodox Theological Conference on Ecumenism. It referred to the ‘Dialogue with the Monophysites’ as a “picture of both total fruitlessness and serious compromises in matters of the faith” and was scathing about the use “out of “love” of alternative designations, such as ‘anti-Chalcedonians,’ ‘pre-Chalcedonians,’ ‘Ancient Eastern Churches,’ or simply, ‘Orthodox.’ At the conference it was established that the dialogue conducted has yielded no positive results and the three joint ‘Statements’ of the Orthodox and anti-Chalcedonians were declared unacceptable from an Eastern Orthodox standpoint.²²

These voices cannot and should not be ignored, especially when they are rooted in a genuine concern that a Common Christology can only be an Orthodox Christology. If there are real criticisms and honest questions then they must be answered. After 1400 years of separation, mistrust and misunderstanding we certainly have time to deal with this issue as thoroughly as is necessary. There is no need for undue haste, especially if that

would result in many people believing that the controversial aspects of our Christological dialogue have been skated over, or dealt with in a superficial manner.

Certainly the Oriental Orthodox are not afraid to deal comprehensively with any and all questions relating to our Orthodox Christology. If there are those who can only use polemics then the responsibility lies even more upon our shoulders to explain our understanding of these matters and clarify those issues about which there remains controversy, working with those Eastern Orthodox who are both serious about the possibilities of the Christological Dialogue, and also committed to their own tradition.

It is out of the reality of this situation that any thoughts about moving towards a Common Christology must be developed. There has not been, as far as ordinary Orthodox in both communities can see, a great movement towards reconciliation on the basis of the Agreed Statements. We cannot pretend that the process has moved further forward than it really has. Nevertheless there have been many positive steps taken and many useful documents produced. It is by building on the positive achievements of the past decades, while taking the negative aspects of our present situation into account, that we may be able to suggest ways of moving further towards expressing a Common Christology.

Possible ways forward

i. Mission

If, by the grace of God, we can come to an understanding that our Orthodox Christology is of the same substance, then this cannot fail to bear fruit in many other contexts. Our Lord Himself said,

I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me (John XVII, 22-23).

If we can reach a point where they express the same Christological faith, whatever other issues remain, then this must surely have an impact on our

mission in the world. Our Lord teaches that it is the expression of unity which bears witness to the truth of the incarnation, and the reality of the good news which the Church proclaims.

On the other hand, if we cannot even commit ourselves to seeking a unity in what we believe; if we cannot commit ourselves to whatever effort and activities are required to discover that we do have the same Christological faith; then we should not be surprised if the world dismisses our witness as so much hot air. Should not the world be able to say of us, "See how they love one another"? When we see that so many Christian communities are falling away even from the very basics of what might be called a widely accepted common Christology, the need for those who hold to an Orthodox Christology to come together and bear a united witness, must surely be greater.

This adds a certain urgency to our dialogue and our efforts to understand one another. It is not merely of academic interest or simply to satisfy an historical interest. It is not the work only of scholars and those with an obsession for abstruse and obscure matters. The very salvation of the world, in some measure, requires and demands the unity of those who believe the same things.

ii. Concentrate on Christology before Reunion

The first tentative suggestion we might consider - and nothing that I am raising should be taken as being an official position - is that we ought to determine what the goal of any efforts should be. One of the widely heard objections to the Christological Dialogue, as it has progressed thus far, is that it is an attempt to bring about a union of the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox communities without dealing thoroughly and comprehensively with the controversial issues that first caused our separation from each other, and have developed as a result of our separation.

These protests have seemed to cause the progress of the Joint Dialogue and efforts towards the complete reconciliation of our Orthodox communities, to stall. Quite naturally the hierarchs of the various local Orthodox Churches do not wish to proceed precipitously in a direction that creates unrest and anxiety among the faithful in their care.

I would like to suggest that the proper response to such tensions is not to ignore them, but to propose a more limited and less disquieting

objective. If we are to recognise a Common Christology, which does embrace the concerns of those who have so far rejected the Joint Dialogue, then we must make it clear that our proximate goal is not a reunion of the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches, but is indeed - as this paper is entitled - merely an effort directed towards determining if our Churches do have a Common Christology, and in which matters there is difference, and whether that difference constitutes an incompatible Christology.

If these dialogues are carefully described as being restricted to the domain of Christology then they cannot be accused of attempting to bring about a union by deception, or one which is only at a political or superficial level. It is only by taking small, sure and certain steps that we can move towards a complete reconciliation and reunion. We must begin by working towards a Common Christology, not as a distraction from the efforts being made toward real union, but as a completely necessary first step. Indeed if we cannot satisfy the reasonable demands of committed and faithful Orthodox in both our communities then a union based on the shared experience of the Orthodox Faith and Tradition will not be possible.

iii. A Comprehensive Investigation

If we agree that every Christological objection must be honestly tackled with charity, as well as with scholarly rigour, since this is the only means of moving on to a deeper reconciliation, then it is clear that a maximalist, rather than minimalist approach must be developed. There will be little value in dealing simply with Christological generalities, or considering only the most superficial issues. On the contrary, what could perhaps be proposed as being most useful is a thorough and well organised consideration of every component of our respective Christological traditions.

Unfortunately there are many faithful, from both communities, who simply do not believe the message of the *Second Agreed Statement*. They will require a great deal more evidence before they will accept that we do have the same substantive Christology. The evidence that will begin to satisfy them will be the fruit of detailed study and comparison of every aspect of Christology. Are we willing to give ourselves to such study? It is not enough, for instance, to say that we all confess that "the hypostasis of the Logos became composite". We must somehow come to understand and even more importantly, to explain what is exactly meant by 'compo-

sition' among both the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox. One could easily imagine a composition that is either a Nestorian external conjunction of natures in the *prosopon* that fails to express the union of natures in the incarnate Word, or else a Eutychian confusion of *ousia*.

What is required is the production by competent theologians, from both sides, of printed materials addressing these issues. These could deal as completely as possible with single issues, such as the reality and integrity of the humanity of the incarnate Word, the meaning of the human will of Christ, the meaning of the different Christological terms such as *ousia*, *hypostasis*, *physis* and *prosopon* in our respective Traditions.

iv. Communication by using the others' language

What must be different in such material is that we must seek to describe our Christologies with the other community in mind. There will be no value, with respect to developing a Common Christology, if an Eastern Orthodox simply describes the Eastern Orthodox Christology using the Eastern Orthodox Christological lexicon, with an Eastern Orthodox audience in mind. Likewise there will be no value in an Oriental Orthodox acting in the same manner.

This is how Christological inquiry has been conducted for the past 1400 years. It cannot help but perpetuate misunderstanding and suspicion. If an Eastern Orthodox writes about 'two natures' with one meaning in mind, it is quite clear that an Oriental Orthodox reading that phrase will probably have a completely different meaning in mind, likewise with the phrase 'one incarnate nature'. It doesn't matter how clearly we may think we are presenting the Orthodox Christology. If we are only speaking in our own Christological language then we will fail to communicate, or even worse, we will communicate a completely different message to the one we mean to convey. The late Father John Romanides ably illustrates this point:

The term in two natures is of Latin provenance and was translated by the Cappadocian oriented Fathers of Chalcedon by the phrase in two physeis. Under more normal conditions the Alexandrians might have accepted the term in their own theological language as in two ousiai. It is only in this anti-Eutychian sense that the non-Chalcedonians must understand the term in two physeis whose only intent is to preclude one ousia after the union."²³

My esteemed brother, Metropolitan Bishoy, co-President of the Joint Commission since its inception, reminds us that

During the dialogue of the two Orthodox families it became clear that the term 'Monophysites' is both wrong and does not express the reality of their Christological teaching. That is why many Chalcedonian theologians have begun to call the Oriental Orthodox "Miaphysites".

In the Greek language - which was the world-wide means of communication in the first centuries of the Christological controversies - the adjective (monos) means "alone (without a companion), only"²⁴ "without accompaniment, sole, singly existent".²⁵ While (mia) means "one" in opposition to many, in opposition to division into parts, and in ethical matters to dissension: to be united most closely"²⁶ "one virtually by union", "one and the same", "one in respect of office and standing".²⁷

On this ground Saint Cyril I, the Pillar of Faith, established his famous formula: "mia physis tou theou logou sesarkomene" (and not "mone physis") which means "one incarnate nature of God the Logos" (and not "only nature"). By "one" he means one nature out of two natures the distinction between them is "in thought alone" "tei theoría mone" as he frequently explained.

Moreover, he explained the phrase "Hypostatic Union" "enosis kat hypostasin", to mean the union of two natures naturally in one single person. To Saint Cyril, the word hypostasis means the person "prosopon" together with the nature "physis" that he carries. The phrase hypostatic union to him, does not at all mean a union of persons, but a union of natures in one single person, a natural union "enosis physikei" or a union according to nature "enosis kata physin".²⁸

We can see from both these examples that language, far from clarifying meaning can be a source of confusion and the root cause of much misunderstanding.

Unless we engage in a process of detailed linguistic, theological and historical consideration of each Christological tradition we will not even begin to develop a Common Christology. A precondition for a possible second step is the consideration by each community's theologians of the

detailed descriptions which should be provided. This allows for each community, having studied the Christological descriptions provided by the other side, to produce an equally detailed and comprehensive response. Such a response should not hesitate to describe every point which is still unclear, or liable to cause misunderstanding, even while indicating those matters which seem to be of the common substance of our Christologies.

This process might then continue as an iterative dialogue, with each side responding, seeking to provide greater clarification, whilst not being afraid to raise those issues which are still obscure in respect of the other community's answers.

We might imagine that a small group of competent and theologically literate members from each community could be assigned to detailed study of particular Christological issues. Perhaps one group might consider the major Christological terms and seek to explain how they are used, while coming to understand how the other side uses them, and what areas of inquiry remain. The results of such a focussed inquiry should be published. The 1990 *Recommendations on Pastoral Issues* has already proposed this, but to date these materials do not appear to have been forthcoming or be easily available. It says,

- (a) We need to publish, in the various languages of our Churches, the key documents of this Joint Commission with explanatory notes, in small pamphlets to be sold at a reasonable price in all our congregations.
- (b) It will be useful also to have brief pamphlets explaining in simple terms the meaning of the Christological terminology and interpreting the variety of terminology taken by various persons and groups in the course of history in the light of our Agreed Statement on Christology.²⁹

This is of course an absolutely necessary pre-condition for the development of a Common Christology. All such efforts will be wasted if they remain confined to a theological elite. Indeed this has been a constant complaint of those who criticise the various Agreed Statements. As far as many are concerned, these Agreements appear to have dropped out of the heavens. Regrettably, people are not easily able to find the texts of the

various papers that have been presented over the last decades, nor the minutes of the many discussions which have taken place. If detailed materials are produced and made available, seeking to explain, compare and contrast, then we might hope that the force of this criticism will be diminished. We can surely afford to expend as many printed words as necessary if there is the possibility of developing a mutual understanding of one another, which might well lead to an appreciation of a Common Christology.

In the twenty-first century we might also consider the great value of the internet, which makes this sort of material available as widely as possible. It is encouraging that my own British Orthodox Church has been able to manage the 'Orthodox Unity' website for some years, as our own, undoubtedly very limited, attempt to play a part in this worthwhile endeavour.

v. Other councils must be considered

So far I have suggested that there might be value in concentrating on Christology as a discrete step in the process of reconciliation. I have proposed that any effort to develop a Common Christology must be comprehensive and cannot afford to ignore or deal superficially with any objections to, or anxieties about, our respective Christological traditions. I have suggested that we must really attempt to communicate what we mean, and understand what the other means, rather than relying on simple expressions of Christology which merely reproduce terminologies that are confusing to our brethren.

I would like to recommend that we must also deal in some manner with the later and controversial councils which are considered ecumenical by the Eastern Orthodox, and are either rejected or not considered authoritative by the Oriental Orthodox. Certainly the *Tome* of Leo must be considered if we are to seriously develop a Common Christology.

The eighth point in the *Second Agreed Statement* states that,

In relation to the four later Councils of the Orthodox Church, the Orthodox state that for them the [previous seven heads of agreement] are the teachings also of the four later Councils of the Orthodox Church, while the Oriental Orthodox consider this statement of the Orthodox as their interpretation. With this understanding, the Oriental Orthodox respond to it positively.³⁰

Now if this is so, then it must mean that an Oriental Orthodox who accepts the *Second Agreed Statement* must find a way of understanding the latter councils as being understood by the Eastern Orthodox in an Orthodox manner. It is not possible to affirm that the Eastern Orthodox have 'maintained the same authentic Orthodox Christological faith' while they accept the latter councils, if acceptance of those councils can only be a sign of gross Christological defects. I suggest that the Oriental Orthodox cannot ignore these councils. However, the meaning of this passage is not at all clear to many members of both communities. The Eastern Orthodox often read it as saying that the Oriental Orthodox don't consider the latter councils very important but don't mind if the Eastern Orthodox want to accept them. In relation to the development of a Common Christology this is not satisfactory, especially to the Eastern Orthodox.

What can we do, however? If we consider the council of Chalcedon and the *Tome* of Leo, I cannot conceive of any realistic scenario where the Oriental Orthodox would accept these as being authoritative and ecumenical, likewise it is not easy to imagine a circumstance where the Eastern Orthodox could repudiate them. We have spent centuries using Chalcedon and the *Tome* as the measure of Orthodoxy on either side, increasingly without ever taking the time to understand what the actual substance of the Christology of the other side really is. Now the *Second Agreed Statement* says, for the first time in 1400 years, that it might be possible both to reject Chalcedon and accept Chalcedon, and yet maintain the same substance of faith.

Therefore I suggest that we should grasp the nettle even of Chalcedon and the *Tome*. We must investigate what the Eastern Orthodox mean by their acceptance of Chalcedon, and what the Oriental Orthodox mean by their rejection. We must separate, for the purpose of developing a Common Christology, the various histories of Council and the *Tome* from the actual use of these events and documents in contemporary Eastern Orthodoxy. Just as we must really communicate with one another concerning every other Christological detail, so we must seek to communicate in respect of what we are trying to safeguard by both the acceptance and rejection of these controversial events and documents.

It is refreshing to read balanced comments by modern Orthodox theologians, such as Father John Romanides,

The Theodoretan crypto-Nestorianism, whose danger loomed so large in Alexandrian circles, was not at all grasped by Leo. In a similar fashion the danger of Eutychianism was not handled properly by Dioscoros. We must always keep in mind the serious imbalance of attitudes toward issues on each side. While the Chalcedonians concentrated on the confusers of the “ousiai” in Christ, the Alexandrians were still fighting the separators of natures or “hypostases”. In the light of this it would be wise to make allowances in terminology while none whatsoever in faith. I would suggest that serious consideration be given to the Fifth Ecumenical Council, not as one which modified Chalcedon, but as one which interprets it correctly. If we agree on the meaning of Cyril’s Christology, we should also be as pliable as he on terms. In this regard the non-Chalcedonians should accept all of Cyril, including 433, and the Chalcedonians must stop overemphasizing the Cyril of 433.³¹

Understanding the role of a less controversial council, such as the Fifth Council held at Constantinople in 553, might indeed prove a key to unlocking agreement on Chalcedon. The distinguished patristic scholar, J.N.D. Kelly suggests,

The struggle, as embittered as it was long and closely entangled with politics, resulted in the emergence in the East in the sixth century (cf. the second council of Constantinople, 553) of a “Neo-Chalcedonianism” which subtly shifted the bias of the council, interpreting its teaching in a positive Cyrilline sense.³²

An open-minded reading of the *Sentence* and *Capitula* of this council suggests that there is much which is immediately acceptable to Oriental Orthodox. A closer reading produces a few points at which clarification might be required. Perhaps what might assist the recognition of a Common Christology would be the production by the Eastern Orthodox of a document containing these. It might also include further explanations wherever these are required such that the document remains a clear exposition of the Fifth Council, as far as the Eastern Orthodox understand it, while also being a document which is written with the Oriental Orthodox perspective in mind. Such a document might then be put before the Synods of the Oriental Orthodox Churches and if found to truly describe our own Christology could be received synodically. This would not be the same as saying that, for instance, the Fifth Council was ecumenical.

That is a different matter altogether and should not be allowed to prevent the development of a Common Christology. However, if such a document successfully expounded the Eastern Orthodox understanding while being acceptable to the Oriental Orthodox, it would be a means of receiving the substance and content of the Fifth Council as our contemporary brethren in the Eastern Orthodox conceive it.

There is a useful passage in the *Sentence* of the Fifth Council (II Constantinople, 533) which shows that the Chalcedonians of this time wanted Chalcedon to be interpreted in the light of the first three councils, and not in any other sense,

Nevertheless, in order that they who thus calumniate the holy council of Chalcedon may have no further opportunity of doing so, we ordered to be recited the decisions of the holy Synods, to wit, of first Ephesus, and of Chalcedon, with regard to the Epistles of Cyril of blessed memory and of Leo, of pious memory, sometime Pope of Old Rome. And since we had learned from these that nothing written by anyone else ought to be received unless it had been proved to agree with the orthodox faith of the holy Fathers, we interrupted our proceedings so as to recite also the definition of the faith which was set forth by the holy council of Chalcedon, so that we might compare the things in the epistle [of Ibas, Bishop of Edessa] with this decree. And when this was done it was perfectly clear that the contents of the epistle were wholly opposite to those of the definition.

For the definition agreed with the one and unchanging faith set forth as well by the 318 holy Fathers as by the 150³³ and by those who assembled at the first synod at Ephesus. But that impious letter, on the other hand, contained the blasphemies of the heretics Theodore and Nestorius, and defended them, and calls them doctors, while it calls the holy Fathers heretics.³⁴

St Cyril the Great, our common father

Both the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches consider their Christology as rooted in the teachings of St. Cyril of Alexandria. Certainly the fathers of the Oriental Orthodox tradition are constant in their dependence on St. Cyril's writings. In three short letters which Severus of Antioch

wrote to the Eutychian Sergius we find that he quotes St. Cyril over sixty times. In fact, any selection of his letters will be found to contain many quotations from St. Cyril, and he considers himself Cyrilline through and through. One of Severus' earliest works was a criticism of a Chalcedonian *florilegium* of Cyrilline quotations, which he believed had mis-represented St. Cyril by truncating his teachings and taking them out of context.

Certainly in the post-Chalcedonian period the writings of St Cyril were used by both sides, who equally wished to be seen as representing his Christology in their own positions.

Father John Romanides reflects this continuing desire to be understood as holding a Cyrilline Christology when he says,

Both Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian Orthodox accept St. Cyril as the chief Patristic exponent of Orthodox Christology. Yet both accuse each other of not remaining completely faithful to Cyril.

The non-Chalcedonian Orthodox reject the Council of Chalcedon and accuse it of Nestorianism because it accepted the *Tome* of Leo, two natures after the union, and allegedly omitted from its definition of faith such Cyrillian expressions as One Nature of God the Logos Incarnate, hypostatic or natural union, and from two natures or from two One Christ. The failure of Chalcedon to make full use of Cyril's Twelve Chapters, to condemn the Christology of Theodore, and its acceptance of Theodoret and Ibas throws suspicion on it. Then there is the weighty accusation that the very act of composing a new definition of the faith contradicted the decision of Ephesus (431) which decreed that, "It is unlawful for anyone to bring forward or to write or to compose another Creed besides that determined by the Holy Fathers assembled with the Holy Spirit in Nicaea".

The Chalcedonian Orthodox, on the other hand, believe that it was Cyril's Christology which was not only fully accepted at Ephesus, but served as the basis of all judgments concerning Christology at Chalcedon in 451 and especially at Constantinople in 553. In spite of its obvious deficiencies the *Tome* of Leo is adequately Orthodox, definitely not Nestorian, and was accepted only as a document against Eutyches, but again only in the light of and in subordination to the synodical letters (especially the Twelve Chapters) of Cyril to Nestorius and John of Antioch [- -]. The terminology and

faith of Cyril were fully accepted, although the Eutychian heresy, the chief concern of the Council, called for some adaptation to the new situation.³⁵

This desire to be rooted in the Christology of St. Cyril is a positive opportunity for those of us in the twenty-first century who are developing a Common Christology which is entirely Orthodox. It provides a fixed and stable foundation for dialogue where other historical documents and events are controversial and have proved to be obstacles to understanding. But in the past the writings of St. Cyril have been used polemically, and selectively, to unnecessarily exclude the Christological expressions of the other community.

Again, Father John Romanides speaks about the negative use made of St Cyril by both of our Orthodox communities. He writes,

The non-Chalcedonian Orthodox have been for centuries accusing the Chalcedonian Orthodox of being Nestorians. On the other hand, the Chalcedonians have been accusing the non-Chalcedonians of either being monophysites (which for them means believers in one ousia in Christ) or of a one-sided insistence on Cyrillian terminology to the exclusion of Cyril's own acceptance of two natures in the confession of faith of John of Antioch which brought about the reconciliation of 433. This one-sidedness was adopted by the Ephesine Council of 449 and rejected by the Council of Chalcedon. It should also be noted that the Flavian Endemousa Synod of 448 was one-sided in its use of and insistence on the Cyrillian terminology of the 433 reconciliation to the near exclusion of Cyril's normal way of speaking about the incarnation.³⁶

At least we can be aware of the need to study the teachings of St. Cyril in an even-handed manner. We can see how, as Father John describes, his writings have been used by both Chalcedonians and non-Chalcedonians in an exclusivist and one-sided manner.

What is required of those of us committed to the study of our respective Christologies is a willingness to allow St. Cyril to be the arbiter of our Christological statements, since he is the common father of both of our Christological traditions. More than that, we must allow the other side to explain how they also understand their commitment to St. Cyril. It would be a great waste of this opportunity if the Chalcedonians simply perpetu-

ated the mistakes made at the Endemousa Synod of 449, while the non-Chalcedonians perpetuate those made at the Ephesine Council of 449.

St. Cyril was willing to bear with what he considered the weakness of the Antiochean Christology, so long as there was agreement on the substantial matters. He was even willing to forgo the condemnation of important figures in the Antiochean community such as Theodore of Mopsuestia, for the sake of a greater unity based on the same substantive Christology. St. Cyril wrote to Proclus saying that had Theodore been still alive and openly approved of the teaching of Nestorius, he ought undoubtedly to have been anathematized; but as he was dead, it was enough to condemn the errors of his books, having regard to the terrible disturbances more extreme measures would excite in the East.

Perhaps we should have in mind the same willingness to bear with one another's weaknesses for the sake of a greater unity, not such that our Common Christology be founded on compromise, rather that it be based on continuing to go that extra mile to understand more clearly what the other side means. We should have that same hesitancy which St. Cyril exhibited. Not to give space to error, but rather that, for the sake of a greater good we might give time for the other Orthodox community to explain itself completely and fully.

Notes and Literature

- ¹ Vide: the editorial, "The Things We Learn from History", *The Glastonbury Bulletin*, No. 89 (February 1995), pp. 247-249.
- ² Christine Chaillot & Alexander Belopopsky (Editors), *Towards Unity. The Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches* (Inter-Orthodox Dialogue, 1998), p. 64.
- ³ Saint and twenty-fifth Patriarch of the See of St. Mark (444-458), he succeeded Saint Cyril the Great.
- ⁴ Saint and Patriarch of Antioch (512-518). He died in exile in Egypt in 538.
- ⁵ Severus of Antioch: *A collection of letters from numerous Syriac manuscripts* (1915). Letter XXXII, The Letter to the Orthodox Brothers in the City Of Tyre, which is Sur. [513-8 A.D.]
- ⁶ Cf. D. A. Hubbard writing on 'Monophysitism' in Walter A. Elwell's *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (1996), "Alexandria (as opposed to Antioch) became the citadel of this doctrine, and Cyril, although deemed orthodox, furnished fuel for the fire kindled by his successor, Dioscorus, and Eutyches, who denied that Christ's body was the same in essence as the bodies of men." Also Bishop Nikolai Velimirović, *The Prologue from Ochrid*, Part 1 (1985), p. 220, "The heretic Dioscorus one of the leaders of the founders of the Monophysite heresy, which holds that in Christ there are not two natures but one."
- ⁷ Protopresbyter John S. Romanides (1927-2001) was an American-born Greek Orthodox priest and sometime Professor of Dogmatic Theology at Holy Cross Theological School of Brookline, Massachusetts, Professor of Theology at Balamund Theological School, in Lebanon and Professor Emeritus of the School of Theology at the University of Thessalonica.
- ⁸ John S. Romanides, Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Consultation: Leo of Rome's Support of Theodoret, Dioscorus of Alexandria's Support of Eutyches and The Lifting of the Anathemas, printed in *Theologia*, Athens, 1994, vol. LXV, issue 3, pp. 479-493
- ⁹ Timothy II Aelurus, saint and twenty-sixth Patriarch of the See of St. Mark (457-477).
- ¹⁰ Ebied R.Y. and Wickham L.R. *Syriac Letters of Timothy Aelurus*, *Journal of Theological Studies* XXI pt 2, p352.
- ¹¹ Ebied R.Y. and Wickham L.R., *op.cit.*, p.359.
- ¹² Philoxenus or Aksnaya (c. 440-523), bishop of Mabbug 485-521, born in Persia, studied at Eddessa under Ibas, but reacted against its prevailing Nestorianism.
- ¹³ A.A.Vaschalde, *Three Letters of Philoxenus* (1902), p.126
- ¹⁴ Anthimus I was Patriarch of Constantinople from 535-536. He was deposed by Pope Agapetus I before March 13 536.
- ¹⁵ Hamilton F.J. & Brooks E.W. *Zachariah of Mitylene, Syriac Chronicle* (1899). Book 9., p279
- ¹⁶ Pope Shenouda III, *The Nature of Christ*, (1991), p. 14.

- ¹⁷ Ebied and Wickham , *op. cit.*, p.352.
- ¹⁸ Ebied and Wickham, *op.cit.*, p.352.
- ¹⁹ Theodosius I, saint and thirty-third Patriarch of the See of St. Mark (535-567).
- ²⁰ Hamilton & Brooks, *op.cit.*, Book 9, p. 293
- ²¹ Hamilton. & Brooks , *op.cit.*, Book 9, p. 289.
- ²² *Vide* "Conclusions of the Inter-Orthodox Theological Conference", translated by Father Peter Heers, published on the Orthodox Christian Information Center website (http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/thess_conclusions.aspx). The full report with conference papers is to be published by Uncut Mountain Press (www.uncutmountain.com) later in 2005.
- ²³ Discussion concerning the Paper of Father Romanides.
- ²⁴ Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament*, Hendrickson Publishers, USA 1996, p.186
- ²⁵ Wesley J. Perschbacher, *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon*, Hendrickson Publishers, USA 1996 p.279
- ²⁶ Thayer, *op.cit.*, p.418
- ²⁷ Perschbacher, *op.cit.*, p.121.
- ²⁸ Metropolitan Bishoy of Damiette, *Towards an Agreed Statement on Christology*, Oriental Orthodox-Anglican Dialogue, Holy Etchmiadzin, Armenia, 5-10 November 2002.
- ²⁹ Chaillot & Belopopsky, *op.cit.*, p. 65
- ³⁰ Chaillot & Belopopsky, *op.cit.*, p. 63
- ³¹ John S. Romanides, *St. Cyril's "One Physis or Hypostasis of God The Logos Incarnate" and Chalcedon*, published in the *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, vol. X, 2 Winter 1964-65; also published in *Does Chalcedon Divide or Unite?* edited by Paul Gregorios, William H. Lazereth, Nikos Nissiotis, WCC, Geneva 1981, pp. 50-75; also published in *Christ in East and West*, edited by Paul R. Fries and Tiran Nersoyan, Mercer University Press, 1987, pp.15-34.
- ³² J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th, revised edition (1977), p. 343
- ³³ The fathers of the Second Ecumenical Council held at Constantinople in 381.
- ³⁴ Schaff & Wace, *Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers of The Christian Church, Second Series*, Vol. XIV, 'The Seven Ecumenical Councils', The Sentence of the Synod, p. 310
- ³⁵ John S. Romanides, *St. Cyril's "One Physis or Hypostasis of God The Logos Incarnate" and Chalcedon*, *op.cit.*
- ³⁶ John S. Romanides, *St. Cyril's "One Physis or Hypostasis of God The Logos Incarnate" and Chalcedon*, *op.cit.*

Tiivistelmä

Glastonburyn metropoliitta Seraphim, *Kohti yhteistä kristologiaa*.

Keskinäiset väärinymmärrykset ja jurisdiktioiden moninaisuus heikentävät orientoaalisten ortodoksisten kirkkojen ja ortodoksisten kirkkojen yhteistä todistusta nykyajassa. Yhteistoiminnan sijaan tilanne kannustaa keskinäiseen kilpailuun. Orientoaalisten ja ortodoksisten kirkkojen virallinen dialogi käynnistyi vuonna 1985. Sen saavutuksista on syytä korostaa etenkin vuoden 1990 *Second Agreed Statementin* toteamusta, että kumpikin perhe on säilyttänyt yhteisen ortodoksisen kristologisen uskon ja katkeamattoman apostolisen perinteen – vaikkakin kristologia ilmaistaan erilaisin termein. Yhteisestä kristologiasta puhuttaessa tarkoitetaan juuri tätä vanhaa ja katkeamatonta oppia, ei mitään uudenlaista tai laimeaa kompromissien kristologiaa.

Second Agreed Statementissa hahmotellun yhteisen kristologian lähtökohtana on Sanan kaksinkertainen samaolemuksellisuus. Näin torjutaan Eutykioksen opetus siitä, ettei Kristus ihmisyydessään olisikaan ollut samaa olemusta meidän kanssamme. Esimerkiksi Dioskuros Aleksandrialainen, Severos Antiokialainen ja Filoksenos Mabbugilainen tuomitsivat Eutykioksen monofysitismiin. Orientoaalisten ortodoksien kanta monofysitismiin käy ilmi myös uudemmissa lausumissa. Paavi Shenouda III muistuttaa, että Kalkedonin konsiilissa (451) ekskommunikoitu Eutykhios erotettiin myös koptilaisen kirkon yhteydestä. Shenoudan mukaan nestoriolaisuutta vastustaessaan Eutykhios lankesi itse harhaoppiin: puolustaessaan Kristuksen luontojen yhteyttä, hän väitti, että ihmisyyys sulautui Kristuksessa jumaluuteen kuin tippa etikkaa valtamereen.

Pelkkä Eutykioksen tuomitseminen ei riitä, vaan inkarnoituneen Sanan samaolemuksellisuus ihmisyyden kanssa on kyettävä ilmaisemaan myönteisesti. Dioskuros toteaa, että Kristus oli lihassa meidän luontomme kaltainen: ”Meidän tähtemme ja meidän kanssamme Hän oli kaltaisemme, ei kuvana eikä vain meitä muistuttavana – manikelaisten harhaopin mukaisesti – vaan täysin todellisesti Mariasta, Jumalansynnyttäjistä [syntyneenä].” Muutkin orientoaliset isät painottavat, että Kristus oli samaa olemusta ihmisten kanssa, kaikessa meidän kaltaisemme – syntiä lukuun ottamatta.

Second Agreed Stamentissa nostetaan esiin joukko yhteisen kristologian aineksia, joille löytyy tukea orientoalisilta ortodoksisilta isiltä. Edustavan esimerkin tarjoaa 500-luvulta peräisin oleva Antimoksen uskontunnustus. Kun sitä luetaan *Second Agreed Stamentin* kristologiaa vasten, havaitaan niiden kristologioitten yhdenmukaisuus. Voidaan sanoa, että *Second Agreed Stament* edustaa kristologiaa, joka on yhteinen sekä orientoaliselle ortodoksiselle perinteelle että ortodoksiselle perinteelle.

Useimmat orientoaalisten ortodoksisten kirkkojen synodit ovat reagoineet myönteisesti *Second Agreed Statementiin*. Myös ortodoksien keskuudessa dialogi on otettu vakavasti ja myönteisesti vastaan. Molempien osapuolten piirissä, mutta etenkin ortodoksien keskuudessa, on myös äänekkäitä poleemikkoja, jotka eivät asiakirjaa

hyväksy. Vaikka orientaalisista ortodokseista onkin saatavilla ajanmukaista tietoa, vanhentuneeseen kirjallisuuteen tukeutuvat kriitikot pitävät heitä edelleen monofysiitteinä. Huolestuttavia ovat jyrkän linjan kannattajat, jotka leimaavat koko orientaalisen ortodoksisuuden harhaoppiseksi. Kriittisiä mielipiteitä ei kuitenkaan tule jättää huomioimatta. Vuosituhantisen erossa olon, epäluottamuksen ja väärinymmärryksen jälkeen kirkoilla tulisi olla aikaa paneutua kristologiaan niin pitkäksi aikaa ja siinä laajuudessa kuin tarvetta on.

Orientaalisten ortodoksien vastuulla on, yhdessä dialogiin sitoutuneitten ortodoksien kanssa, selventää kiistanalaisia kysymyksiä. Toistaiseksi ei kuitenkaan ole nähty merkkejä siitä, että osapuolet olivat ottaneet keskinäisen sovinnonteon askelia *Agreed Statementsin* luomalla perustalla. Seuraavassa on joukko alueita, joilla kirkko-perheet voisivat ilmentää ja edistää keskinäistä yhteyttään nykyistä paremmin.

- i) *Yhteinen todistus.* Jos yhteisesti jaetusta kristologiasta ja uskosta saavutetaan yhteisymmärrys, sillä olisi välitön vaikutus kirkkojen antamaan todistukseen maailmassa. Kuinka maailma voisi ottaa ortodoksit vakavasti, jos he eivät pysty sitoutumaan keskinäisen yhteyden etsimisiin siinä mihin he uskovat?
- ii) *Keskittyminen kristologiaan, ei yhdentymiseen.* Käynnissä olevaa dialogia on kritisoitu siksi, että sitä on pidetty yrityksenä saattaa ortodoksit ja orientaaliset ortodoksit yhteen ilman, että ensin on selvitetty kirkkojen eroon johtaneita syitä ja sitä mitä eron perinne on tuonut tullessaan. Jännitteiden ja epäluulon hälventämiseksi olisikin suorasanaisesti todettava, että dialogin ensisijaisena tavoitteena ei ole kirkkojen yhdentyminen vaan yhteisen kristologian löytäminen.
- iii) *Syvällinen kristologian selviytyö.* Yhteyden tiellä on sovellettava maksimaalista lähestymistapaa, jolla perehdytään johdonmukaisesti ja syvällisesti molempiin kristologisiin traditioihin. Käsitteelliset lausumat on myös avattava ymmärrettävällä tavalla. Tarvitaan kummankin osapuolen teologioiden yhteisiä selvityksiä esimerkiksi siitä, mitä inkarnoituneen Sanan ihmisyyden todellisuus ja kokonaisvaltaisuus tai Kristuksen inhimillinen tahto tarkoittavat. Myös keskeisten kristologisten käsitteiden, kuten *ousia*, *hypostasi*, *fysis* ja *prosopon*, sisältö on avattava ymmärrettävällä tavalla.
- iv) *Puhuminen toisen omalla kielellä.* Kristologioiden kuvaamisessa on pidettävä mielessä toinen yhteisö; osapuolten oman puhuttava toisilleen, ei itsekseen. Yhteiskomission työskentely on osoittanut, että kristologinen kieli voi olla vakavien sekaannusten ja väärinymmärrysten aiheuttaja. Siksi tarvitaan dialogia, jossa osapuolet reagoivat toinen toistensa kristologisiin määritelmiin. Näin etenevän tarkennetun vuoropuhelun tulokset tulee saattaa kirkon jäsenten tietoon huokeina julkaisuina ja internetin välityksellä – julkisuus on elinehto yhteisen kristologian saavuttamiselle.
- v) *Kiistanalaisten konsiilien tarkastelu.* Vuoropuhelussa tulisi paneutua niihin ortodoksien ekumeenisina pitämiin konsiileihin, joiden arvovaltaa orientaaliset ortodoksit eivät tunnusta. Jos pyrkimyksenä on aidosti yhteinen kristologia, etenkin paavi Leon *Tomosta* ja Kalkedonin konsiilin kristologiaa on käsiteltävä. Orientaalisten ortodoksien tulisi pyrkiä mitä niiden hyväksyminen merkitsee ortodokseille. Ortodoksien puolestaan tulisi selvittää,

miksi orientaaliset ortodoksit eivät niitä hyväksy. Yhteisen kristologian kehittämisen kannalta on myös tarpeen erottaa kiistanalaisten konsiilien ja *Tomoksen* historia niille nykyajassa annetusta tulkinnasta. Huomion tulisi kohdistua siihen, mitä osapuolet pyrkivät turvaamaan, kun ne joko hyväksyvät tai torjuvat Kalkedonin. Perehtyminen Konstantinopolin konsiiliin (553) asiakirjoihin voisi osoittautua ratkaisuksi kiistaan, sillä orientaaliset ortodoksit saattaisivat hyväksyä Konstantinopolin konsiilin teologian osaksi kirkkojen yhteistä kristologiaa.

Sekä orientaaliset ortodoksit että idän ortodoksit katsovat kristologiansa perustuvan Kyrillos Aleksandrialaisen opetukseen. Kalkedonin jälkeisenä aikana kummankin puolen teologit tukeutuivat juuri Kyrillokseen oman kristologiansa puolustamisessa – ja syyttivät toisen puolen teologeja hänen perinteestään luopumisesta. Halu pitäytyä Kyrilloksen kristologiaan tarjoaa myönteisen mahdollisuuden 2000-luvun yhteisen kristologian ilmaisijoille. Se luo vakaan ja tasapuolisen perustan kiistanalaisten historiallisten tapahtumien ja dokumenttien tarkastelemiselle. Kyrillos itse oli valmis hyväksymään antiokialaisessa kristologiassa näkemänsä heikkoudet, kunhan ydinasioissa vallitsee yksimielisyys. Ykseyden säilyttämiseksi hän oli myös valmis luopumaan vastapuolen pääedustajien tuomitsemisesta. Ykseyden edistäminen edellyttää nyt samanlaista valmiutta toistemme heikkouksien kestämiseen – ei kuitenkaan niin, että yhteinen kristologia rakentuisi kompromissin varaan. Suuremman yhteisen hyvän tähden ortodoksisten yhteisöjen tulee tarjota toisilleen aikaa ja mahdollisuus toinen toisensa syvälliseen selittämiseen.