

**Zeitschrift:** Internationale kirchliche Zeitschrift : neue Folge der Revue internationale de théologie  
**Band:** 79 (1989)  
**Heft:** [4]: Koinonia auf altkirchlicher Basis  
  
**Artikel:** English translation of the agreed statements  
**Autor:** [s.n.]  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-404767>

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## I. Doctrine of God

### *I/1 Divine Revelation and its Transmission*

The Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – created the world and “did not leave himself without witness” (Acts 14:17), but revealed and continues to reveal himself in many and various ways in the world and in history.

1. God reveals himself in his works, for “ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely his invisible power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made” (Rom. 1:20) and this especially in men who were created in his image and likeness, who “show that what the law requires is written on their hearts” (Rom. 2:15).

2. Men were disobedient to the divine commandment and sinned, and their likeness to God became distorted and obscured, and they were unable to know the true God, “became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened”, they therefore “worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator” (Rom. 1:21, 25)

But God the All Merciful, “who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4) chose to reveal himself to the world in a direct and personal way. God revealed himself, therefore, directly and effectively “of old to our fathers by the prophets” (Heb. 1:1) and this in the people of Israel. This revelation of God, although real, was nevertheless partial and educational in character: “the law was our custodian until Christ came” (Gal. 3:24).

3. “But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son” (Gal. 4:4). “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn. 1:14). In Jesus Christ there took place the whole and perfect revelation of God: “in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (Col. 2:9). Only in Jesus Christ is salvation possible: “and there is salvation in no one else” (Acts 4:12). In Jesus Christ, the Triune God, whose essence is inaccessible and incomprehensible to us, revealed himself in his salvific energies and, indeed, in his whole plenitude: “We say that we do indeed know our God from his energies, ... but his essence remains beyond our reach” (Basil the Great, ep. 234.1 – PG 32.869).

4. This supernatural revelation in Christ is communicated in the Tradition of the Holy Apostles, which was handed on in written form in the Scriptures inspired by God and in oral form by the living voice of the Church. The oral tradition is preserved, on the one hand, in the

Creed and other definitions and canons of the seven Ecumenical Councils and local synods, in the writings of the Holy Fathers and in the holy liturgy and generally in the Church's liturgical practice, and, on the other hand, finds expression in the continued official teaching of the Church.

5. Scripture and tradition are not different expressions of the divine revelation but distinct ways of expressing one and the same Apostolic Tradition. Nor does any question arise, therefore, of the precedence of one over the other: "both have the same force in relation to true religion" (Basil the Great, Spir. 27.2 – PG 32.188). "Scripture is understood within the tradition, but the tradition preserves its purity and the criterion of its truth through Scripture and from the content of Scripture" (Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission for the Holy and Great Synod, 16th to 28th July 1971, Chambésy 1973, p.110). The Apostolic Tradition is preserved and handed on unadulterated by the Church in the Holy Spirit.

*In the view of the Joint Orthodox–Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on "Divine Revelation and its Transmission" represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.*

*Chambésy/Geneva, August 23, 1975*

*Signatures*

### *I/2 The Canon of Holy Scripture*

Holy Scripture consists of the books of the Old and New Testaments which have been accepted by the Church into the canon established by it and in use in it. They are:

a) In the Old Testament the twenty-two – according to a different reckoning the thirty-nine – books of the Hebrew canon, together with another ten books, the so-called "Anagignoskomena", i.e. books "read" or "worth reading", which were later known in the West as "deuterocanonic", a total of forty-nine books.

The first-mentioned thirty-nine books are "canonical": Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra (Greek: 2 Esra, Vulgate and Slavonic: 1 Esra), Nehemiah, Esther, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Eze-



kiel, Daniel, Obadiah, Joel, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

The additional ten books, the Anagignoskomena, are: Judith, Greek: 1 Esra (Vulgate: 3 Esra, Slavonic: 2 Esra), 1, 2 and 3 Maccabees, Tobias, Jesus Sirach, Wisdom of Solomon, Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah.

The “canonical” books are distinguished by the special authority constantly accorded to them by the Church; but the Church also values highly the Anagignoskomena which have long been part of its canon of Holy Scripture:

*Note.* With respect to the books Greek: 1 Esra (Vulgate: 3 Esra, Slavonic: 2 Esra) and 3 Maccabees, the Old Catholic Commission adds the following qualification: Although these books are not rejected by their Church, they are not included in the Old Catholic lists of the biblical books, which derive from an old Latin tradition. The International Conference of Old Catholic Bishops still has to declare its position on this point.

b) The canonical books of the New Testament number twenty-seven in all, namely: the four gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; the Acts of the Apostles; the letters of Paul: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon and Hebrews; the Catholic Epistles: James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2 and 3 John, Jude; and the Revelation to John.

*In the view of the Joint Orthodox–Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on “The Canon of Holy Scripture” represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.*

*Chambésy/Geneva, August 25, 1975*

*Signatures*

### *I/3 The Holy Trinity*

We believe and confess One God in three hypostases, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father, who “loved” the Son “before the foundation of the world” (Jn. 17:24), revealed himself through him in the Holy Spirit in order that this love might be in his disciples (Jn. 17:26) through the communion of the Holy Spirit who has been “sent into our hearts” (Gal. 4:6). This revelation is an ineffable and inexplicable mystery, a mystery of love, “for God is love” (1 Jn. 4:8).

1. On the basis of this revelation we believe that the God who is by nature one is triune in the hypostases or persons. Father, Son and Holy Spirit denote the three modes of being, without beginning and eternal, of the three persons and their interrelationships; these persons are indivisibly bound up with one another and united in one divine nature. Thus “we worship the unity in the trinity and the trinity in the unity, in their paradoxical differentiation and unity” (Gregory of Nazianzus, or. 25.17 – PG 35.1221).

2. We interpret this unity, on the one hand and above all, in terms of the unity and identity of the divine nature, and, on the other hand, in terms of the unity and identity of the properties, energies and will, and when we understand the Son and the Holy Spirit to derive from the Father as their one origin and ground (*aition*), we are careful to preserve the unity without confusion. The three divine persons are united in the one God, bound together yet without confusion, on the one hand because they are of one nature, on the other hand because they interpenetrate each other without confusion. Therefore “from the unity of nature and the mutual penetration of the hypostases and from the identity of their will and work, their power and might and movement, we know that God is one and undivided; for truly one is God: God (Father) and the Word and his Spirit” (John of Damascus, f.o. 8 – PG 94.825), to the eternal exclusion of any separation or division of nature, any subordination of the three persons on the pretext of precedence or eminence.

3. We interpret the trinity on the one hand in terms of the difference between the three persons, but on the other hand, in terms of the diversity of their processions. Thus the three divine persons are distinct from each other without being divided; each has the fullness of divinity, and the one divine nature remains, of course, undivided and unseparated, so that “the divinity is undivided in the distinct (hypostases)” (*ameristos en memerismenois* – Gregory of Nazianzus, or. 31.14 – PG 36.149). The Father is distinct from the other persons inasmuch as from his nature and from all eternity he begets the Son and sends forth the Holy Spirit. The Son is distinct from the other persons inasmuch as he is begotten of his Father; the Holy Spirit inasmuch as he proceeds from the Father. Thus the Father is unbegotten, without ground (*anaitios*) and without origin, but at the same time is “the one origin and the one root and spring of the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Basil the Great, hom. 24.4 – PG 31.609). He alone is their ground (*aitios*) who from eternity begets the Son and sends forth the Holy Spirit.

As for the Son, he is begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit is sent forth or proceeds from the Father. The Father, therefore, is without ground (*anaitios*) and himself the ground (*autoaitios*), whereas the Son and the Holy Spirit have their ground in the Father, the Son because he is begotten, the Spirit because he is sent forth, and indeed in both cases, without beginning and eternally, undivided and unseparated. Accordingly the mysterious and ineffable but nevertheless real distinction between the three hypostases or persons of the Holy Trinity consists exclusively in these their three incommunicable properties, namely, in the unbegottenness of the Father, the begottenness of the Son, and in the procession of the Holy Spirit. "The three holy hypostases are distinct exclusively in these hypostatic properties, not in nature, but by the distinctive feature of each hypostasis, and thus separated they remain inseparable" since they "do not denote the nature but the mutual relationship and mode of being" (John of Damascus, f.o. 8;10 – PG 94.824, 837).

4. On the Holy Spirit in particular, it is taught in Holy Scripture (Jn. 15:26), in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed of the 2nd Ecumenical Council, and in the ancient Church generally, that he proceeds from the Father, the source and origin of divinity. His eternal procession from the Father is here to be distinguished from his temporal revelation and sending into the world, which takes place through the Son. When therefore we understand the procession of the Holy Spirit in the sense of his eternal being and procession without beginning, we confess the procession from the Father alone, and not also from the Son. But when we understand it in the sense of the temporal procession of the Holy Spirit and of his sending into the world, then we confess the procession from the Father through the Son or even from both Father and Son.

Accordingly we believe in the Holy Spirit "who proceeds from the Father ... and is communicated to the whole creation through the Son... We do not say that the Spirit is from the Son... (But) we confess that he is revealed and communicated to us through the Son... (He is) the Holy Spirit of God the Father, since it is indeed from the Father that he proceeds, but he is also called (Spirit) of the Son because he is indeed revealed and communicated to the creation through the Son, but does not derive his being from the Son" (John of Damascus, f.o. 8;12; hom. 4.4 – PG 94.821, 832, 833, [849]; 96.605).

In this sense the Doctrinal Letter of the International Conference of Old Catholic Bishops in 1969 states: "We entirely reject the addition

of the *filioque* adopted in the West in the eleventh century without recognition by an ecumenical council. The ground for this rejection is not merely the uncanonical form of this addition, though this in itself represents an offence against love as the bond of unity. But above all we repudiate any theological doctrine which makes the Son joint author of the Spirit.” In a similar sense, the special statement of the same Bishops’ Conference in the same year, “On the Filioque Question”, also emphasizes “that there is only one principle and one source in the most Holy Trinity, namely, the Father”.

*In the view of the Joint Orthodox–Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on “The Holy Trinity” represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.*

*Chambésy/Geneva, August 28, 1975*

*Signatures*

## II. Christology

### *II/1 The Incarnation of the Word of God*

1. We believe in Jesus Christ, the only Son and the only Word of God “who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man” (Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed). In the incarnation the eternal and timeless God entered time and history as a human being “in order to unite the human race once again in himself as its head” (Cyril of Alexandria, Nest. 1.1 – PG 76.17).

Jesus Christ has two natures: he is perfect God who has everything the Father has, except his unbegottenness; but at the same time he is also perfect man “with a rational soul and body”, like us in every respect except our sin.

As human being Jesus Christ stands out from all other human beings by his supernatural birth and sinlessness, since his incarnation took place through the Holy Spirit and from the Virgin Mary, and he was also free from original sin and from all personal sin.

2. Concerning the two natures of Christ, the divine and the human, we confess what the Church teaches on the basis of Holy Scripture and holy tradition: namely, that the two natures, the divine and the human, have been hypostatically united in Christ, and this indeed in the hypostasis or person of God the Word, “without confusion without change, without division, without separation” (4th Ecumenical Council – Mansi 7.116).

Jesus Christ is God-man, the one divine person in two natures, the divine and the human, with two wills and two operations (*energeiai*). But since the person of Jesus Christ unites the two natures and it is this person which wills and operates accordingly, we can therefore call the operations of the Lord divine-human. “He does what man does not just in a human manner, for he is not only human but also divine; and he does what God does not just in a divine manner, for he is not only divine but also human” (John of Damascus, f.o. 59 – PG 94.1060). Through the “mutual interpenetration” or “mutual indwelling” of the two natures, not only is the duality of the natures, wills and operations preserved but also the unity of the person.

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

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

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

4. The hypostatic union results in:

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

b) The divinisation (*theōsis*) of the human nature of Christ. It abides, of course, “within the limits proper to it and within its kind” (6th Ecumenical Council – Mansi 11.637).

c) The sinlessness of Christ.

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

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

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

*In the view of the Joint Orthodox–Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on “The Incarnation of the Word of God” represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.*

*Chambésy/Geneva, August 28, 1975*

*Signatures*

## *II/2 The Hypostatic Union*

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

1. The divine nature was united with the human nature hypostatically, i.e. in the hypostasis or person of God the Word. In his incarnation he assumed not human nature in general, but an individual human nature. This did not exist previously; it was “without hypostasis of its own nor did it have any prior individuality ... but the Word of God itself became hypostasis to the flesh” (John of Damascus, f.o. 55; 46 – PG 94.1024, 985). Consequently, the Lord did not assume a hu-



man hypostasis but a human nature, and this indeed is human nature in its entirety. The individual human nature assumed was a true and complete one “with rational soul and body” (4th Ecumenical Council – Mansi 7.116). It did not exist previously in an individual, independent of the one person of Jesus Christ, nor had it previously been created, but its existence began in the moment of the divine incarnation “by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary”, in the unity of the person or hypostasis of the Word of God. It therefore never had any other hypostasis than that only of the Son of God.

2. Jesus Christ is therefore the one person “in two natures”, the divine and the human, but not “from two natures”. The 4th Ecumenical Council teaches us “to confess ... one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence (hypostasis)” (Mansi 7.116). The hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ, which took place “in the moment of the conception, without confusion or separation”, remains forever indivisible and indissoluble. The human nature remains forever inseparably united with the divine nature. The God-man is therefore “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8).

3. Since there are two natures, the divine and the human, in Jesus Christ, there are also in him two freely operating wills, appertaining to the natures, the divine and the human; two operations (*energeiai*) appertaining to the natures, the divine and the human, as well as two free wills (*autexousia*) appertaining to the natures, the divine and the human; the wisdom and the knowledge, too, are both divine and human. Because the Lord is equal in nature to God the Father, he wills and operates in freedom as God; because he is also equal in nature to us men, he wills and operates in freedom also as a human being. “Willing and operating” he possesses of course “not divided but united; he wills and works in each of the two natures, of course, in communion with the other”. We therefore understand the two wills not as contrary or as striving against each other, but each as willing in harmony the same thing each according to its own mode. Certainly the weak human will followed the strong divine will and subordinated itself to that will, for both wills and operations acted “in unity” and “cooperated for the salvation of the human race” (6th Ecumenical Council – Mansi 11.640). Put in general terms: “Since the hypostasis

of Christ is one and Christ is one, he is one who wills in accordance with both natures: as God on the basis of good pleasure, as human being in obedience” (John of Damascus, volunt. 27 – PG 95.160).

The Church teaches therefore what the Fathers of the 6th Ecumenical Council also defined: “We adhere firmly in every way to the ‘without confusion’ and ‘without division’ and proclaim in short: since we believe that one of the Holy Trinity, after the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, is our true God, we affirm that his two natures are shown in his one hypostasis...The distinction of natures in the one hypostasis is seen in the fact that each nature wills and operates what is its own in communion with the other. Accordingly, we also praise the wills and operations appertaining to the two natures, which cooperate for the salvation of the human race.” Even after the union “his divinized human will was not annihilated but continued all the stronger” (Mansi 11.638, 640).

*In the view of the Joint Orthodox–Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on “The Hypostatic Union” represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.*

*Chambésy/Geneva, August 28, 1975*

*Signatures*

### *II/3 The Mother of God*

The Church believes that the divine and human natures are hypostatically united in Jesus Christ. It accordingly believes also that the Blessed Virgin Mary gave birth not to a human being merely but to the God-man Jesus Christ and that she is therefore truly Mother of God as the 3rd Ecumenical Council defined and the 5th Ecumenical Council confirmed. According to St. John of Damascus, the name “Mother of God” (*theotokos*) “embraces the whole mystery of the divine plan of salvation” (f.o. 56 – PG 94.1029).

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

There is an intrinsic connection between the truth of the one Christ and the truth of the divine motherhood of Mary. “...for a union of two



natures took place; therefore we confess one Christ, one Son, one Lord. According to this understanding of the unconfused union, we confess the Holy Virgin to be 'theotokos' because God the Word was made flesh and lived as a human being and from the very conception united to himself the temple taken from her" (3rd Ecumenical Council, Formula of Union – Mansi 5.292). "...we teach with one voice that the Son (of God) and our Lord, Jesus Christ, is to be confessed as one and the same person ... begotten of his Father before the worlds according to his Godhead but in these last days born for us and for our salvation of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to his humanity" (4th Ecumenical Council, Definition of Faith – Mansi 7.116).

2. Venerating the Virgin Mary as Mother of God, whose child-bearing St. Ignatius of Antioch called "a mystery to be cried aloud" (Eph. 19:1 – PG 5,660), the Church also glorifies her perpetual virginity. The Mother of God is ever-Virgin, since, while remaining a maiden, she bore Christ in an ineffable and inexplicable manner. In their address to the Emperor Marcian, the Fathers of the 4th Ecumenical Council declared: "...the fathers ... have expounded the meaning of faith for all and proclaimed accurately the blessing of the incarnation: how the mystery of the plan of salvation was prepared from on high and from the maternal womb, how the Virgin was named Mother of God for the sake of him who granted her virginity even after her pregnancy and kept her body sealed in a glorious manner, and how she is truly called Mother because of the flesh of the Lord of all things, which came from her and which she gave to him" (Mansi 7.461). And in its decision the 7th Ecumenical Council declared: "We confess that he who was incarnate of the immaculate Mother of God and ever-Virgin Mary has two natures" (Definitio – Mansi 13.377). As St. Augustine says: "He was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary. And even the birth as human being is itself lowly and lofty. Why lowly? Because as human being he is born of a human being. Why lofty? Because he was born of a virgin. A virgin conceived, a virgin gave birth, and after the birth she remained a virgin" (symb. 1.3/6 – PL 40.630). (Cf. also Sophronius of Jerusalem, ep.syn. – PG 87.3164, 3176; John of Damascus, f.o. 87 – PG 94.1161; Maximus the Confessor, ambig. 31 – PG 91.1276 and others)

3. Accordingly the Church venerates in a very special way the Virgin Mother of God, though "not as divine but as Mother of God according to the flesh" (John of Damascus, imag. 2.5 – PG 94.1357). If, because of the redemption in Christ and its blessings, the Church

glorifies God above all and offers him the worship of true adoration due to the divine nature alone, at the same time it venerates the Mother of God as chosen vessel of the work of salvation, as she who accepted the word of God in faith, humility and obedience, as gateway through which God entered the world. It calls her the Blessed One, the first of the Saints and the pure handmaid of the Lord,<sup>1</sup> and thereby ascribes to her a relative sinlessness by grace, from the time the Holy Spirit descended upon her, for our Saviour Jesus Christ alone is sinless by nature and absolutely.

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

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

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

*In the view of the Joint Orthodox–Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on "The Mother of God" represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.*

*Chambésy/Geneva, August 27, 1977*

*Signatures*

<sup>1</sup> See note to the German original, p.57.

### III. Ecclesiology

#### *III/1 The Nature and Marks of the Church*

I. 1. By its very nature the Church is intimately related to the mystery of the Triune God who reveals himself in Christ and the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph. 5:32). It is “the treasure house of God’s ineffable mysteries” (John Chrysostom, hom. 16.3 in 1 Cor. – PG 61.134).

No explicit and complete definition of the term “Church” is to be found in Scripture and tradition. What we find are many images and symbols from which in an indirect way the nature of the Church can be known.

According to the Scriptures, the Church is “the body of Christ” (Rom. 12:4f; 1 Cor. 12:13.27), “the people of God” (1 Pet. 2:10), the “household” or “temple” of God (1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 2:19; 1 Cor. 3:16f), the “royal priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:9), the bride of Christ (cf. Mk. 2:20; Mt. 25:1ff; Rev. 21:2), God’s “vineyard” (Is. 5:7).

Tradition also provides descriptions in which one or other aspect of the Church is emphasized: it is episcopal in structure, it has a priestly and charismatic character, it is a communion of believers, it is composed of all the true believers of all the ages, it is the human race united in the God-man.

2. The Church, therefore, by its very nature is no mere human fellowship, no passing phenomenon of human history. It is rooted in God’s eternal decision and plan for the benefit of the world and the human race. In the Old Testament it was prefigured in Israel and announced in advance by the prophets to be the coming people of God of the New Covenant in which God would establish his final and universal sovereignty on earth (Is. 2:2; Jer. 31:31). In the fullness of time it became a reality in the incarnation of the Word of God, through the proclamation of the Gospel, the choice of the Twelve Apostles, the institution of the Lord’s Supper, Christ’s death on the cross and his resurrection, as well as through the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost for the sanctification of the Church and the equipment of the Apostles for their work.

3. Thus the Church founded by the Lord on earth is the Body of Christ, with Christ as its Head, a divine-human organism; a community which can be described and perceived and, at the same time, an inward and spiritual relationship between its members and its divine founder and among themselves. As the pilgrim people of God, the Church lives on earth in expectation of its coming Lord until the ful-

filment of the Kingdom of God. It exists and lives both in heaven, in those already made perfect who there celebrate the victory, and on earth in believers who fight the good fight of faith (cf. 2 Tim. 4:6). In one aspect the Church is invisible and heavenly, in the other it is earthly and visible, a community and organism with a pastoral and priestly ministry, which is structurally linked with the Apostles, with abiding dogmatic and ethical principles and a constant ordered worship, a body in which clergy and laity are differentiated.

In the Church, the new life in Christ is a reality in the Holy Spirit; in it the grace and divine life of the Head is given to all members of the Body for their sanctification and salvation.

4. The Church established by the Lord on earth cannot, therefore, be merely something inward, an invisible fellowship or an ideal and indefinable Church of which the individual churches are only imperfect images. Such a conception of the nature of the Church is in contradiction to the spirit of Scripture and tradition; it destroys the real content of revelation and the historical character of the Church.

II. Dogmatic expression is given of the nature of the Church in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, as confirmed by the 4th Ecumenical Council in Chalcedon. In this creed the confession of faith in the Triune God is followed by the confession of faith in "the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church" (Mansi 7.112).

1. The Church is *one*, for just as Christ the Head of the Church is one, so, too, there is also one body animated by the Holy Spirit, in which Christ as Head and believers as members are united. In this body all the local Churches are united to one another by the unity of faith, worship and order. The unity of faith and worship represents the bond which binds believers with the Redeemer and with one another, in love and peace and finds expression in the confession of the same faith and in celebration of the same liturgy, insofar as it rests on dogma. The unity of order takes the form of the exercise of leadership on the basis of the same principles and the recognition by believers of one ministry and one authority in accordance with the canonical rules, namely the episcopate which has a conciliar structure.

If the members of the Church perceive the truths of faith in various ways, this does not destroy or diminish the unity of faith; nor does this happen if the Church sometimes exercises patience towards people who depart from the unity of faith and order, and does not exclude them from the body of the Church, for pastoral considerations and in the exercise of "economy".

Although the Church, the Body of Christ, has many members, therefore, these nevertheless all constitute one body and are united in an indivisible unity. The Lord prayed for this unity in which the unity of believers is grounded in the unity of Father and Son (Jn. 17:21) as an image of the Triune God. "For Father, Son and Holy Spirit have one will. Thus it is his will also that we, too, should be one, when he says: That they all may be one as you and I are one" (John Chrysostom, hom. 78.3 in Jo. – PG 59.425).

2. The Church is *holy* since Christ its Head is holy and gave himself for it "that he might sanctify it ... that the Church might be presented before him in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that it might be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25–27). Christ made the Church the "household of God" (1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 3:6); he gave it fellowship and share in his holiness and grace and in his divine life; he "who sanctified the people through his own blood" (Heb. 13:12). Christians are therefore also called saints (Acts 9:13).

The fact that members of the Church sin does not nullify the holiness of the Church. The Fathers were agreed in condemning those who because of immoderate and ascetic tendencies took the view that the Church is a community made up exclusively of completely sanctified members.

3. The Church is *catholic*, since Christ its Head is the Lord of all things. It is predestined to extend to the whole creation, over all peoples and through all ages (Mt. 28:20; Mk. 16:15; Acts 1:8). This is the external quantitative meaning of catholicity.

The Church is called catholic in the inner qualitative sense of the word because although it is scattered over the whole earth, it is always and everywhere the same. It is catholic, because it has the "sound doctrine" (Tit. 2:1; cf. 1 Tim. 6:20), continues in the original tradition of the Apostles and truly continues and preserves "that which has been believed everywhere, always and by all" (Vincent of Lerins, commonit. 2 – PL 50.640). The Church is catholic therefore in the sense that it is the orthodox, authentic and true Church.

According to Cyril of Jerusalem, "the Church is called catholic because it extends over all the world from one end of the earth to the other; and because it teaches universally and completely one and all those doctrines which ought to come to the knowledge of mankind, concerning things both visible and invisible, heavenly and earthly; and because it brings into subjection to godliness the entire human race, rulers and those governed, learned and unlearned; and because



while it deals exhaustively with and heals every kind of sin of soul and body, it also possesses in itself every form of virtue which can be named, in deeds and words and in every kind of spiritual gift” (catech. 18.23 – PG 33.1044).

4. The Church is *apostolic*, since its divine founder was the first “apostle” (Heb. 3:1; cf. Gal. 4:4), and because it is built upon “the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” (Eph. 2:20).

The mission of Jesus has a wider context: the Son is sent into the world by the Father, and he himself sends the disciples (cf. Jn. 20:21) to whom he says: “He who hears you hears me” (Lk. 10:16). After their death the mission is continued by the Church, the inheritance of truth entrusted by the Lord to the Apostles is preserved and passed on in the spiritual life, in the celebration of the sacraments and in doctrine. The apostolic doctrine preserved by the Church is the inner aspect of its apostolicity. Its other element is the unbroken series and succession of pastors and teachers of the Church, starting from the Apostles, which is the outward mark and also the pledge of the truth of the Church. These two elements of apostolicity, the inner and the outer, support and condition one another; if either one or the other is lacking the essential apostolicity and fullness of truth of the Church are impaired.

The four dogmatic marks of the Church mutually interpenetrate each other in indissoluble unity and point to the indestructibility and infallibility of the Church, the “pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15).

*In the view of the Joint Orthodox–Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on “The Nature and Marks of the Church” represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.*

*Chambésy/Geneva, August 29, 1977*

*Signatures*

### *III/2 The Unity of the Church and the Local Churches*

1. The Church is the one indivisible Body of Christ in which the believers, as members of this Body, are united with Christ as its Head and with one another. The supreme expression and the perennial source of this unity is the sacrament of the Eucharist, communion

with the Body and Blood of Christ: “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor. 10:17).

2. The one Church on earth exists in the many local Churches whose life is centred on the celebration of Holy Eucharist in the communion with the lawful bishop and his priests. “Let all follow the bishop as Jesus Christ did the Father, and the priest as you would the apostles... Let that eucharist be held valid which is offered by the bishop or by one to whom the bishop has committed this charge” (Ignatius of Antioch, Smyrn. 8.1 – PG 5.582)

3. The spread of the Christian faith to different lands and among many peoples and the consequent rise of a multitude of local Churches did not abolish the unity of the Church nor does their existence now do so, so long as the local Churches maintain pure and unadulterated in the harmonious disposition of all, the faith transmitted to them from the Lord through the Apostles. Unity in faith is the supreme principle of the Catholic Church: “The Church ... has received from the apostles and their disciples the faith ... in one God, the Father Almighty ... and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God ... and in the Holy Spirit... The Church has received this proclamation... Although scattered throughout the whole world, it carefully preserves it as if living in one house. It believes it just as if it had but one soul and one and the same heart, and proclaims and teaches and hands it down, with perfect harmony, as if it possessed only one mouth” (Irenaeus of Lyons, hear. 1.10.1–2 – PG 7.549, 552).

4. As a fellowship of believers united around the bishop and the priests and as the Body of Christ, each local Church is the manifestation of the whole Christ in one particular place. It represents the sacramental reality of the whole Church in its own locality. For it is in no divided form, that the life, that has been given to the Church by God the Father through the presence of Christ in the Holy Spirit, is given to the local Churches; each local Church, on the contrary, has that life in its fullness. Thus, for all the differences in custom and usage, the life of the local Churches is in essence one and the same: “There is one body and one Spirit, ... one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of us all...” (Eph. 4:4–6). There are not many bodies but the one Body of Christ, undivided and whole, in each place. This unity of life in the local Churches reflects the unity of the Holy Trinity itself.

5. The local Churches recognize in one another the same reality and they affirm their essential identity, above all by the unity of faith, fur-

thermore by the unity of their liturgical and sacramental life, their unity in the basic principles of canonical order and of Church government, as well as by the unity of the episcopate. Authentic expression has been given to these basic principles in the canons of the seven Ecumenical Synods and the acknowledged local synods or they are attested in the Fathers of the Church. Since the Church in this present time still awaits deliverance from all evil and must therefore pray God so to deliver it, to make it perfect in his love and bring it together from the ends of the earth into his Kingdom (Didache 10.5; 9.4), the local Churches must devotedly maintain the essential unity given to them, and constantly struggle against the forces of sin and division.

6. In the course of history, the local Churches, which in specific geographical regions have established a deeper unity with a particular bishop as principal head, affirm and practice their fellowship by the common reception of the eucharistic gifts by their members, by the exchange of visits between their leaders and representatives, by the interchange of messages of greeting, as well as by mutual aid and intercession, and in other ways in accordance with the distinctive gifts received by each. Each is careful to observe the rule forbidding intervention or meddling in the domestic affairs of the others.

7. On matters of faith and other common concerns, i. e. where issues arise which concern them all and exceed the competence of each individual Church, the local Churches take counsel together and make common decisions, faithfully observing in such synods the order of honour and rank canonically established in the Church. They do so, above all, in ecumenical synods, which are the supreme authority in the Church, the instrument and the voice through which the Catholic Church speaks, whereby there is a constant effort to preserve and strengthen its unity in love.

*In the view of the Joint Orthodox–Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on “The Unity of the Church and the Local Churches” represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.*

*Bonn, August 24, 1979*

*Signatures*



### *III/3 The Boundaries of the Church*

1. The love of God and his purpose of salvation are unlimited and embrace all men of all times in the whole of creation, for it is his will “that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). In accordance with the divine plan of salvation, it is in and through the Church founded by God and not at a distance from it and independent of it that man comes to partake of salvation, for in the Church is found the divine truth, to it the Saviour has entrusted the means of achieving beatitude; the Church is the sure way to salvation and eternal life. Salvation is offered to believers in the Church by the Holy Spirit which abides always in it. This is why Irenaeus also says: “For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and every kind of grace” (Irenaeus of Lyons, haer. 3.24.1 – PG 7.966).

2. Because of sin, not everyone accepts the saving grace of God and comes to the fellowship of the Church. But not all those who do come to the Church confess the divine truth as revealed by Jesus Christ in the fullness of time. Journeying through history, the Church of Christ has become divided into many Churches which disagreed with each other because the faith and doctrines handed down from the Apostles were debased. Today Christian Churches and confessions differ not only in unessential respects, but also do not teach the same in even fundamental points of Christian doctrine. This led among other things to the false and unacceptable theory that the true visible Church, the Church of the age of the Apostles and Church Fathers, no longer exists today but that each of the individual Churches retains only a portion, greater or less, of the true Church and that none of them, therefore, can be regarded as a genuine and essentially complete representation of the true Church.

3. But from the day it was founded right down to our own day, the true Church, the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, has gone on existing without any discontinuity wherever the true faith, worship and order of the ancient undivided Church are preserved unimpaired as they are reflected and formulated in the definitions and canons of the seven Ecumenical Synods and the acknowledged local synods and in the Fathers of the Church.

4. Our Joint Commission gives heresy and schism the appropriate significance and regards communities which continue in heresy and schism as in no sense as efficacious sites of salvation parallel to the

true visible Church. It nevertheless believes that the question of the Church's boundaries can be seen in a larger light. Since it is impossible to set limits to God's power whose will it is that all should find salvation and come to know the truth and since further the Gospel clearly speaks of salvation by faith in the unique Son of God – "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life" (Jn. 3:36) –, it can be considered as not excluded that the divine omnipotence and grace are present and operative wherever the departure from the fullness of truth in the one Church is not complete and does not go to the lengths of a complete estrangement from the truth, wherever "God Himself is not called in question", wherever the source of "life, the Trinity, is sincerely proclaimed and the mystery of the divine economy in the incarnation is acknowledged" (Petrus III of Antioch, Letter to Michael Cerularius of Constantinople 14 – PG 120.805, 808).

5. On this view of the question of the Church's boundaries, where the unity of the Church as the Body of Christ is understood in a wider sense, all who believe in Christ are called to seek lovingly, sincerely and patiently to enter into dialogue with one another, and to pray unceasingly for the restoration of the Church's unity in faith and full fellowship so that the Lord God may lead all to know the truth and to attain the fullness of unity.

*In the view of the Joint Orthodox–Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on "The Boundaries of the Church" represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.*

*Bonn, August 24, 1979*

*Signatures*

### *III/4 Authority of the Church and in the Church*

#### *I.*

1. The origin and basis of the authority of the Church as a fellowship of God with man is the power and authority of its Lord and Head Jesus Christ, which he received from his Father (cf. Mt. 28:18; Lk. 10:16). The Lord exercised this power and authority related to the work of salvation in his earthly life and passed it on to the Apostles after his resurrection – through them to the bishops – and the whole Church (Mt. 28:19–20; Jn. 20:21).

The Lord, who had promised the Church that he would remain with it “always, to the close of the age” (Mt. 28:20), also sent it “another Comforter”, “the Spirit of Truth” (Jn. 14:16–17; 15:26; 16:13), in order that he would always remain in it and lead it into all truth. That is why the Church is called “the Church of the living God, pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15).

2. The Church exercises its power and authority in the name of Jesus Christ and in the strength of the Comforter living within it. That is why it carries out the task given to it in an authoritative manner by the spiritual strengths that fill it in all its members, that is “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal. 5:22–23), not though by using external coercive means.

3. In exercising authority constituted this way, the Church leads its members to recognize godly truth set forth with full power and leads its members to appropriate it in the freedom to which “Christ has set us free” (Gal. 5:1) and in obedience. The recognition of the truth occurs under the influence of the Holy Spirit, but the truth sets us free (cf. Jn. 8:32) because “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Cor. 3:17).

## II.

1. The authority of the Church, which is borne by the entire Church as the Body of Christ, became evident as, in the course of time, through proceedings and decisions, Holy Scripture and holy tradition were preserved from all sorts of heretical falsehoods; the canonical books of the Holy Scriptures were distinguished from false ones and the canon of Holy Scripture was fixed; the living transmission of the faith was guarded, interpreted and passed on; the confession of faith was formulated, completed and established; the basic principles of ministerial office and of the constitution were fixed; and the order of worship and the life of the whole Church was established.

2. A continuous task of the Church is the interpretation of Holy Scripture. Holy Scripture does not stand above the Church; it came into being in it. As the Church lives in the light of the witness of Holy Revelation, so Holy Scripture is also understood and interpreted in connection with living tradition in the Church and with its decisions regarding issues of faith. That is why only that doctrine is true – beyond the difficulty of expression bound to specific time and conditioned by language – that agrees in its essence with Holy Scripture and

holy tradition. In expressing its authority in dogmatic decisions, the Church always rests on both, that is on Holy Scripture and holy tradition, by preserving the testimony of both and deepening their understanding.

3. Here the unanimous teaching of the Fathers and teachers is also of special significance for the Church. In their writings, the Apostolic Tradition, whose inspired written witness is Holy Scripture, is preserved and interpreted. The Church accepts as authoritative witness of the truth the unanimity of the Fathers (cf. Vincent of Lerins, *commonit.* 3; 28 – PL 50.641, 674–678, and the whole tradition of the Fathers).

### III.

Specific bearers and organs of authority in the Church are:

1. The bishop who in apostolic succession lawfully presides over the local Church. St. Ignatius of Antioch clearly expressed the position and task that the bishop has in his position as bearer of authority when he said that whosoever obeys the bishop accepts the authority of God, for the bishop represents and bears within himself the authority of God (Magn. 3.1–2; 6.1; Trall. 2.1 – PG 5.664f, 668, 676), whereby he always acts collegially with the presbyters whom he appointed: “As the Lord did nothing without the Father with whom he is one neither by himself nor through the apostles, therefore shall you do nothing without the bishop and the presbyters” (Magn. 7.1; cf. Eph. 4.1; Trall. 3.1; Smyrn. 8.1 – PG 5.668, 648, 677, 713).

In the power and the authority of the grace of the episcopal office, the bishop guards the purity of the doctrine of the faith of the Church, maintains its canonical order, is the administrator of the sacraments and through preaching leads the flock entrusted to him to the pastures of salvation of evangelical grace. In his Church, the bishop acts in unanimity with the presbyterium and the people who, in turn, follow the bishop as their evangelical shepherd. According to St. Cyprian, the Church is “the people who are united with the bishop, and the flock that clings to their shepherd. You must therefore know that the bishop is in the Church and the Church in the bishop” (Cyprian of Carthage, *ep.* 66.8 – PL 4.406/419).

2. The synods of the Church, in particular the Ecumenical Councils. In the councils each of the bishops represents his own Church by virtue of his episcopal office. The resolutions of the councils, though, claim and have authority as far as they have the consent of the Church, which is represented by the assembled bishops (cf. Acts 15).

#### IV.

1. The authority of the Church is also connected with the common consciousness of the faith of the Church. This is the unanimity of faith of clergy and people, the broadest witness of the whole (*plērōma*) of the Church taking part in the responsibility of transmitting truth kept intact and unadulterated. The common understanding of the faith of the Church also forms, among others, the decisive criterion for the recognition of the Ecumenical Councils as such and of their Fathers as true interpreters of the faith of the Church, which they canonically represent.

2. The common consciousness of the faith shows itself in diverse ways. It finds its expression with the confessors and martyrs, the desert fathers and the mystics, the holy monastic fathers, the believers gifted with a charisma and generally with all who have received the gift of the Holy Spirit in Baptism and Confirmation and who are also called to bear witness to the Gospel in the world, in worship and in other expressions of the life of the Church.

3. Finally, it needs to be emphasized that authority at all levels and exercised in all ways presupposes the Spirit of truth, love, humility and liberty. Only thus will the authority of the Church and in the Church be exercised as a blessing for its life and its ministry to the world. For the Lord of the Church, to whom is given all power and authority in heaven and on earth, exercised this power as one who served (cf. Lk. 22:27; Jn. 13:14–17). That is why the authority of the Church must have a serving character and in all things be focused on the building up of the Body of Christ and its growth in love (cf. Eph. 4:11–16).

*In the view of the Joint Orthodox–Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on “The Authority of the Church and in the Church” represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.*

*Moscow, September 20, 1981*

*Signatures*

#### *III/5 The Infallibility (Unerring) of the Church*

The real and true God (Jn. 3:33; 17:3; Rom. 3:4; 1 Thess. 1:9) sent his Son, who is himself the Truth (Jn. 14:6), “for us men and for our salvation”, which will be realized in the Church founded by him. The



Son sends the Comforter from the Father to the Church, the Spirit of Truth, who proceeds from the Father, in order that he will always remain with it and lead it into all truth (Jn. 14:15–17). The Church therefore takes part in the truthfulness, faithfulness and infallibility of God. The Holy Spirit bears witness to Christ and that is why the Church, also enlightened by the Comforter, bears witness to its Lord and his teaching when it takes up the Apostolic Tradition and passes it on (Jn. 15:26–27). The Holy Spirit teaches it all things and reminds it of all that Christ has told it (Jn. 14:26; cf. 15:26).

Because Christ remains with his Church to the close of the age (Mt. 28:20), it keeps – in spite of all human weakness of its members – the revealed truth, the “treasure” entrusted to it (2 Tim. 1:14), pure and intact so that the powers of death will not prevail against it (Mt. 16:18). That is why the Church is called “house of God”, “pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15) and is able to reliably impart to its members the faith handed to it, and to bear unadulterated witness to it before the world. The infallibility of the Church derives from the Lord and from the Holy Spirit. The Church is in Christ and he works in it through the Spirit who is sent into the hearts of the faithful (cf. Gal. 4:6). This infallibility is not invalidated in its essence by the sin and error of the members (cf. Rom. 3:3–4).

The Church is only infallible as a whole but not its individual members themselves, be they bishops, patriarchs, or popes, or be they clergy, people, or individual local Churches themselves. Because the Church is the fellowship of believers who are all taught by God (cf. Jn. 6:45), infallibility uniquely applies to the whole Church. Together ordained and lay persons form as members the Body of Christ and are “the fullness of him who fills all in all” (Eph. 1:23). It is the believers as a whole who have the “unction of him who is holy”, who rightly know the truth (cf. 1 Jn. 2:20, 27) and live by it. These believers as a whole, then, do not commit an error when they profess a common faith in one accord from the bishops to the last believer of the people.

For that reason the highest organ of the Church in declaring belief infallibly is an ecumenical council. Local synods as well as bishops and all individual members of the Church are subject to the Ecumenical Council as the spokesman of the entire Church. This was already the case in the age of the Apostles when they gathered, together with the presbyters and the entire congregation, in Jerusalem to express the will of the entire Church with unanimity. This assembly exercised greater authority than any single apostle (cf. Acts 15). An ecumenical

council, making its decisions under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, lays claim to infallibility on the basis of its accord with the entire catholic Church. Without this accord no assembly is an ecumenical council.

The necessity for the Church to reach dogmatic decisions arises when the sound doctrine of the Church is threatened or when there is need for specific explanation and testimony to ward off heresy and schism and in order to maintain the unity of the Church. It is clear that infallibility only applies to matters of salvation.

Fundamentally the Holy Spirit, who is the spirit of Christ, inspired the Holy Scripture which witnesses to the eternal Word of God made flesh. The guidance of the Church by the Holy Spirit is therefore to be understood as one which is in correspondence with Scripture as well as transmitted apostolic teaching and is never without reference to these two (cf. Jn. 16:13). The continuity of belief maintained in the Church based on this includes the necessity to hold firm to the fullness of the witness of the Church at all times.

*In the view of the Joint Orthodox–Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on “The Infallibility (Unerring) of the Church” represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.*

*Moscow, September 20, 1981*

*Signatures*

### *III/6 The Synods of the Church*

As the Body of Christ, the Church is the Temple of the Holy Spirit in which all members are baptized into the one Body and so abide in the communion of the new life and together know the truth in the Holy Spirit.

The episcopal and synodical constitution of the ancient Church is an expression of the life of the Church as the fellowship of all its members living in the unity of the Body of Christ. Accordingly the bishops, as representatives of the Head of the Church – which is Christ – and presiding over the eucharistic and synodical assembly, are joined with the whole people of God as members of the one Body (cf. Ignatius of Antioch, Smyrn. 8.2 – PG 5.713).

In the diversity of new life that finds fulfillment in Christ through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:1 – 31), the synodical character shows itself

to be basic for Church order. That is why the Church as a people called by God, redeemed by Christ and enlightened by the Holy Spirit can be referred to as the great synod in which the trinitarian unity of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is reflected.

This fundamental character of the Church is especially evident in the representative gatherings of the bishops of the local Churches, as they meet in synod to discuss and to decide questions of faith and order, which decisions are ultimately subject to adoption or refusal by the whole Church.

The highest expression of the synodical life of the church is found in the Ecumenical Council. It is convened in order that the bishops, as representatives of the community of all local Churches, may make decisions on questions of faith and order which concern the whole Church and which will be binding on it. The ecumenical councils serve as the highest organ of the Church when they deal with warding off false doctrines, formulating dogma, forming and consolidating the Church constitution and maintaining ecclesial unity based on the true faith.

We recognize these seven as such Ecumenical Councils: Nicaea 325, Constantinople 381, Ephesus 431, Chalcedon 451, Constantinople 553 and 680 as well as Nicaea 787. In them the faith of the one holy, catholic and apostolic Church found its expression, and the unity of all the local Churches in the one Holy Body of Christ was in evidence. That is why the ecumenical councils do not stand above the Church as a whole but in it. That is why the ecumenical character of a council and the validity of its decisions are not already given by its convocation. Rather it demonstrates its ecumenical character in the subsequent free reception by the Church as a whole (*plērōma*).

Through their participation in the whole life of the Church, the members – ordained and laity – realize their unity in the Body of Christ. In this unity and totality the infallibility of the Church finds its expression. Accordingly the ecumenical councils can also acknowledge the decisions of local synods as being made under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand local synods have also prepared the substance of the decisions of ecumenical councils and supported the adoption of the decisions reached.

The decisions of councils are decisions of faith (*horoi*) or canons (concerning law and order). Of these, the decisions of faith have direct authority and are of binding character for the entire Church, for they concern dogma based on revelation. They therefore, in substance, can-



not be changed or revoked. The Church can, however, interpret them according to the needs of particular situations for a better understanding of, and witnessing to, the faith. The canons of ecumenical as well as local synods can, on principle, be replaced or supplemented by new canons of corresponding later synods as long as they do not affect questions of faith.

Generally the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches are also of the opinion that their synods have the right, when necessary, to establish new canons and to apply them in their own Churches.

*In the view of the Joint Orthodox–Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on “The Synods of the Church” represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.*

*Moscow, September 20, 1981*

*Signatures.*

### *III/7 The Necessity of Apostolic Succession*

1. Here apostolic succession is understood as the passing on of the grace of ordained ministry by the lawful laying on of hands, and in a broader sense, as apostolicity: the continuity and genuine preservation of faith handed down by the Apostles, as well as the continuous succession of the bishops from the Apostles onward. The former constitutes the basis, the latter is an essential characteristic of apostolic succession in that deviation from apostolic teaching destroys apostolic continuity and illicit ordination by unauthorized persons allows it to be broken.

The apostolic succession in this broader sense is essential and necessary for the life of the Church in order to continue the Lord’s work of salvation through faithful transmission of sanctifying and saving grace. As Jesus Christ was sent by the Father, so he also sent the Apostles in order to gather the people of God through them and to found and build up his Church.

2. In their capacity as eye-witnesses of the risen Christ and in their function at the foundation of the Church, the Apostles in fact do not and cannot have successors. They have successors, however, in the apostolic mission of gathering and building up the congregation time and again through the preaching of the Word of God and presiding

over the liturgical and sacramental life, especially at the celebration of Holy Eucharist.

Even though the New Testament speaks of many charisms and ministries among the faithful, it does not leave any doubt about the uniqueness, unrepeatability and fundamental significance of the ministry and mission of the Apostles (cf. Acts 1:21–22; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 2:20; Rev. 21:14).

3. The Church has its life from Christ who is present in it and works through the Holy Spirit. Christ is the Lord of the Church and speaks to it, loves it and is the one to whom it listens. This relationship between Christ and the Church is not only an abstract thought but a concrete reality and experience which is transmitted through persons called by Christ. As this was the case in the age of the Apostles, so must it be in our time and at all times, for the structure of the Church in its fundamental character cannot be other than the one that Christ gave it.

The Church, which as a community cannot be without this structure, must also be in continuous temporal relationship with its origin and with the Church of previous and subsequent generations. The call of ordained ministers in apostolic succession, therefore, occurs not as something totally new without connection with the origin of the Church, but as the taking up and passing on of that which occurred in the Church from the beginning. The laying on of hands with prayer in the community of the whole Church is the only sacramental means of passing on of the grace of ordained ministry to which Scripture and tradition attest.<sup>1</sup>

4. The necessity of maintaining apostolic succession both as the continuity of apostolic teaching and as the passing on of ordained ministry and its grace of mission by the lawful laying on of hands is the teaching of the Church Fathers in general.

5. The Orthodox Church of the East draws attention to the necessity of apostolic succession in the above sense from the beginning and especially now and raises it whenever the question of restoring Christian unity arises. The Old Catholic Church holds fast to this necessity as well.

<sup>1</sup> More regarding this matter in the texts concerning the sacraments with which the commission will deal later.

*In the view of the Joint Orthodox–Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on “The Necessity of Apostolic Succession” represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.*

*Moscow, September 20, 1981*

*Signatures*

### *III/8 The Head of the Church*

The Head of the Church is Christ, the First-born of all creation through whom and for whom all things were created and through whom God decided to reconcile all things to himself by making peace by the blood of his cross (cf. Col. 1:15–20). Out of the fullness of the life of the Head, Christ, the members of the Body have new life in Christ through the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 6:11; 2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 2:9f). “And God has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all” (Eph. 1:22f). Christ is in fact the “one Lord” (Eph. 4:5), the only Head of the Body, the Church, from whom “the entire body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God” (Col. 2:19; cf. Eph. 4:15). Therefore Christ cannot be thought of without the Church, the Head not without the Body and vice versa, because Christ and the Church are joined with one another and abide in absolute, inseparable and eternal union. The faithful, justified by the blood of Jesus Christ, are saved by him, have peace with God and boast of the hope of the glory of God. This hope cannot be destroyed because the love of God has been poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to them (cf. Rom. 5:1–5). So the Church as the Body of Christ is joined with its Head by the Holy Spirit and together with him is the whole Christ (cf. Eph. 1:22f). In him the members have new life and grow through the Holy Spirit towards perfection in divine grace in the firm hope that they shall be like him for they shall see him as he is (1 Jn. 3:2).

The focus of the new life is the Holy Eucharist in which the inner form of the bond between the Body and the Head shows itself. The bishop who celebrates the Eucharist presides in the place of Christ, and by bringing to God in this manner the sacrifice which has been wrought by Christ once and for all he represents Christ as the Head of the Church assembled around him in whose name he celebrates.

The bishops, as the successors of the Apostles who carry on the apostolic ministry, are faithful guarantors of the catholicity and apostolicity of the Church. According to divine law, the bishops among themselves are of the same rank because they all have received the same episcopal grace by the lawful sacramental laying on of hands and stand in the apostolic succession. They take part in the same way without quantitative or qualitative difference in one and the same episcopal authority. They are bishops among bishops, servants of Christ and the Church. They, too, are members of the Body, i.e. the Church, holding a special position in it.

Even though the bishops are equal to one another in episcopal authority, the life of the Church during the first three centuries evidenced a differentiation in the positions of honour granted to the various episcopal sees. The bishops of certain local Churches, who had gained greater authority for various reasons, held a special position of honour and exercised a greater influence in ecclesiastical matters. The position of honour of the bishops of these sees was unfolded in Ecumenical Synods since the 4th century to a presidency of honour (*presbeia timēs*) in the Church (3rd canon of the 2nd Ecumenical Synod – Mansi 3,560). The Bishop of Rome enjoyed such an honorary position because the see of Rome took the first place in the order of episcopal sees: Rome was the capital of the empire and its Church preserved the apostolic tradition – still without any innovations; it brought the Gospel of salvation to peoples and nations who had not yet heard of Christ and it was rich in Church life and works of love. So the Bishop of Rome possesses the presidency of honour in the Church. But with regard to episcopal authority, he does not differ whatsoever from his brother bishops. The same is valid for the other bishops who hold honorary rank in the Church.

According to the teaching of the Orthodox and the Old Catholic Church, all the decrees of later dates therefore, which ascribe a monocratic and absolute authority over the whole Church to the Bishop of Rome and which regard him as infallible when he defines doctrine in the exercise of his office “as shepherd and teacher of all Christians” (*ex cathedra*), are regarded as unacceptable. With their unwavering striving for unity, both Churches hope that the existing difficulties and divisions will be overcome by the Head and Lord of the Church, so that according to his word those who believe in him may all be one and thus the world may come to faith (cf. Jn. 17:20f).

*In the view of the Joint Orthodox–Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on “The Head of the Church” represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.*

*Chambésy/Geneva, October 7, 1983*

*Signatures*

## IV. Soteriology

### *IV/1 Christ's Work of Salvation*

“God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn. 3:16). God in his love and mercy wanted to save man who had lost the communion with God through sin and so was condemned to destruction and death. This decision of God was carried out by God’s Son and Logos who, in the fullness of time, “for us men and for our salvation” was sent into the world and was made man, “humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:8).

The Son of God completed the work of salvation by his incarnation and his entire earthly life, his baptism, his word and his deeds, his suffering, his death on the cross, his descending to the realm of the dead, his resurrection and ascension and the sending of the Holy Spirit.

By his incarnation, the Lord began to fulfill the great mystery of salvation. In the person of God the Logos, the hypostatic union of the human and divine natures came about forming the foundation and starting point for the salvation of the whole human race, which is understood as one organic and unified whole (cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *hom. opif.* 16 – PG 44.185). God the Logos assumed a special human nature in his incarnation but because of the unity of the human race he united all humanity within himself, the “one united and undivided nature” (Gregory of Nyssa, *tres dii* – PG 45.120) which he redeemed and restored to its original beauty. The Lord has recapitulated and united to himself “the original form of man” and “the long history of men” so that we gain in him what we have lost in Adam: the freedom from sin and death and eternal life in fellowship with God (cf. Irenaeus of Lyons, *haer.* 3.18.1, 7 – PG 7.932, 938; cf. also Cyril of Alexandria, *Jo.* 9 – PG 74.273; Leo I of Rome, *sermo* 12.1 – PL 54.168f). In the last Adam the image of God which had been darkened and distorted by sin in the first Adam has been restored, renewed and made richer.

Furthermore the message, which Jesus Christ, as the greatest prophet and teacher of mankind, has proclaimed in word and deed, has a saving power for man in order to liberate the spirit of man from the darkening effect and the error that came from sin. What he taught he confirmed through signs and predications about what was to come. Through his entire earthly life he proved himself to be the best and



unsurpassable example of holiness and obedience to the will of God. The message of the Lord, which is indestructible (cf. Mt. 24:35; Mk. 13:31; Lk. 21:33) and not in need of perfection, is offered by a gracious God to all men without distinction. It is the call of God directed to all to turn back "out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9), to the truth and salvation in Christ which has absolute and universal character and is meant for all at all times.

The divine Saviour achieved the salvation of the human race by humbling himself and by his total obedience which he demonstrated during his entire life, particularly by his suffering and his death on the cross by which he has freed the human race of sin and "became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him" (Heb. 5:9). The sacrifice made on the cross by Jesus Christ as the eternal High Priest and Mediator of the New Covenant (cf. Heb. 9:11–15) in our place and for our sins was an atonement. He became "the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 Jn. 2:2). By his sacrifice he redeemed and saved us because he offered his life out of love as a ransom. By his death on the cross the Lord took upon himself the sins of men (cf. Is. 53:4f; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24) and washed them from us by his blood "that we might die to sin and live to righteousness" (1 Pet. 2:24). The power of the sacrifice offered on the cross at Calvary once and for all embraces humanity of all ages, giving to them the saving grace flowing from it.

The Lord completed his work of salvation in glory. This is evident in his descending to the realm of the dead, in his resurrection and ascension to heaven, in his sitting at the right hand of the Father, in his capacity as future judge of the living and the dead, as well as in the Church founded by him. In it he continues the redemption of the world through the work of the Holy Spirit sent at Pentecost to remain in it forever, by giving of himself to those for whom he continuously intercedes before God (cf. Heb. 9:24). The resurrection of the Lord is the confirmation and certain guarantee that man is freed from sin, corruption and death, and it is at the centre of the Christian faith (cf. Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:20–23). It is the pledge and the beginning of the resurrection and immortality of all, for the Lord is "the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" in which "all shall be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:20–22; cf. Col. 1:18).

The last manifestation of the glory of the Lord is his coming again at the end of time, for he will judge the living and the dead, renew

heaven and earth and reign with the elect in the Kingdom of the Father to all eternity.

*In the view of the Joint Orthodox–Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on “Christ’s Work of Salvation” represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.*

*Chambrésy/Geneva, October 7, 1983*

*Signatures*

#### *IV/2 The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Church and the Appropriation of Salvation*

Out of love for sinful man (cf. Jn. 3:16), God our Lord sent his Son into the world, who reconciled all things in heaven and on earth (cf. Col. 1:20) and renewed creation by his resurrection (cf. 2 Cor. 5:15–18). Jesus Christ commanded his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all nations (cf. Mt. 28:19f) so that his salvation may give light to all who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death (cf. Lk. 1:79).

The appropriation of salvation by individual human beings takes place in the Church through the work of the Holy Spirit who grants his grace. The Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and rests in the Son and is given and has appeared through the Son to the faithful (cf. John of Damascus, f.o. 8 – PG 94.821, 833), always remains in the Church, fills it and builds it up, renews and sanctifies it and makes it into an “ark of salvation” for the whole world. He is the Paraclete who is sent by the Lord to lead the Church into all truth (cf. Jn. 16:13). All that the Saviour brings about in the Church for the well-being of men is, according to the holy Fathers, “fulfilled by the grace of the Spirit” (Basil the Great, Spir. 16/39 – PG 32.140). The Holy Spirit is as it were the soul of the Church, the life-giving, sanctifying and unifying power of its body. The Holy Spirit and the Church are inseparable: “for where the Church is, there the Spirit of God is also, and where the Spirit of God is, there the Church is and all grace” (Irenaeus of Lyons, haer. 3.24.1 – PG 7.966). The Holy Spirit is fundamental for the new existence of man in the Church whose rebirth occurs by water and the Spirit (cf. Jn. 3:5f).

We humans receive the gift of the Holy Spirit in the Church through Christ, and thus become children of God and fellow heirs with Christ (cf. Rom. 8:15–17); we are brought back into communion with God,



for which he has created us. The spirit of sonship lives in our hearts and cries: “Abba, Father” (cf. Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). He “helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words” (Rom. 8:26). The Spirit lives in the body of the faithful as in a temple (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19). He unites them in the celebration of Holy Eucharist to the one body in the fellowship of the Church. He allows Christians to take part in his holiness; they become “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4), i. e. “deified through the partaking of the divine shining of the light and not changed into the divine being” (John of Damascus, f.o. 26 – PG 94.924). He imparts to each individual his gift of grace for the building up of the Body of Christ: the gift of speaking wisdom, the gift of speaking knowledge, the gift of healing, the gift of discerning spirits, and especially the gift of ordained ministry as an organ for building up this Body (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4–11. 28f).

God saves man without violating his free will. “He wants all to be saved but he forces nobody. God is willing ... to save man not against his will and determination, but with his will and freely-made decision (John Chrysostom, hom. 3.6 in Ac. 9.1 – PG 51.144). The appropriation of salvation in Christ by man occurs by the cooperation of the Holy Spirit and man. The Holy Spirit effects the vocation, the illumination, the conversion, the justification, the rebirth in Baptism and the sanctification in the Church; man, for his part, accepts the grace offered and participates freely by faith and his good works, in other words, by “faith working through love” (Gal. 5:6). This cooperation is not to be understood as if God alone achieves one part of the work and man alone another; rather all things are achieved by God, without whose help man can do nothing for his salvation. But man also participates in all things, he is moved to act himself and not to remain inactive (cf. Augustine, corrept. 2/4 – PL 44.918: *aguntur ut agant, non ut ipsi nihil agant*). “From the God of the universe, who works all in all, we must believe that he does it in the manner that he awakens, protects and strengthens the free will which he himself once granted and not in such a way that he nullifies it” (John Cassian, coll. 13.18 – PL 49.946; cf. Augustine, Spir. et litt 34/60 – PL 44.240). This cooperation of God and man embraces the entire new life in Christ. One cannot say that man behaves passively in any act of faith – and were it even the first one – and that God alone works in him.

Correspondingly, the Church rejects any teaching according to which God alone grants his saving grace to some but not to others,

thus by his decree predestinating some to salvation, others to damnation. God is not the originator of evil but the source of life and salvation. That is why he desires “all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4).

The rebirth and sanctification of men is the special work of the Holy Spirit. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit expected at the end of time has already occurred in the Church since the day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:16–18). The glory of the end time is no longer merely a hope but already a present reality. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church offers certain guarantee for this. If we have in our hearts the part, which is the pledge of the Spirit, we will not doubt the whole, which is the perfection of the gift in the blessedness of eternal life (cf. Rom. 8:23; 2 Cor. 1:22f; 5:5; Eph. 1:13f; 4:30; Tit. 3:6f; cf. also John Chrysostom, *res. mort.* 8 – PG 50.431).

*In the view of the Joint Orthodox–Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on “The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Church and the Appropriation of Salvation” represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.*

*Chambésy/Geneva, October 7, 1983*

*Signatures*

## V. Doctrine of Sacraments

### *V/1 The Sacraments or Mysteries of the Church*

1. In the New Testament the word “mysterion” refers to the inconceivable act of God’s work of salvation in Christ. The Church, in which Christ remains for ever, is a continuation of the mystery of Christ, of the wonderful union of the divine and human nature. The invisible, uncreated salutary grace of the Triune God is manifested in the Church in connection with physical means, historical institutions and concrete acts, that is with natural and real signs. This grace is bestowed by the Holy Spirit who is sent to the Church and gives all in it.

2. The Holy Spirit, leading the Church into all truth (cf. Jn. 16:13), guarantees it the divine grace necessary for the salvation of men. This grace is manifold and is bestowed abundantly.

3. During his earthly ministry, which had its noblest expression in the cross and resurrection, Christ created the salvific means of sharing with us grace: the Holy Sacraments or Mysteries. Christ imparted these sacraments to the Church. As regards the fundamental and essential aspects of their liturgical realisation in prayer and visible signs connected with it they received their shape through the Apostles. In this way then the institution and arrangement of the sacraments are derived from the New Testament: in part expressly and directly from the words and actions of Jesus, in part from indirect references and actions of Jesus as well as the conviction of his disciples and Apostles that whatever they were instituting and directing to be done in the life of the Church was in union with the will and direction of the Lord. And so they do not offer of themselves anything new or arbitrary regarding the fundamentals and essentials of salvation.

4. The sacraments with which the Church was endowed are: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Unction, Ordination and Marriage. Even though this list of sacraments can neither be found in a systematic way in the New Testament nor in the tradition of the Fathers, it reflects the uninterrupted conviction and practice of the Church.

5. The sacraments as specific sanctifying actions lead to the new creation and unfolding of life in Christ through the incorporation of the recipients into the Church as the Body of Christ, this being effected by the Holy Spirit. Through the sacraments of the Church each individual achieves his development to life in Christ in all the manifestations of his or her personal and corporate existence. This whole

new existence and development of the believers to life in Christ gained by the sacraments is a reliable way to the heavenly kingdom and leads to eternal life.

6. The sacraments are not mere symbols of grace but their reliable instruments and transmitters. The physical elements of the sacraments are consecrated through prayers and sacred actions of the Church and are connected with the communication of grace in different ways in the individual sacraments.

7. The use of physical elements in the sacraments is necessary because of the psycho-somatic condition of human beings: “If you were incorporeal he would have given you naked incorporeal gifts; but as the soul is connected with the body he gives you the spiritual in the physical” (John Chrysostom, hom. 82.4/83.4 in Mt. – PG 58.743).

8. The physical means are not effective by themselves but in virtue of the presence of the Holy Spirit: “If there is grace in the water it does not come from the nature of water but from the presence of the Spirit” (Basil the Great, Spir. 15/35 – PG 32.132).

9. It is the general view of the Church that the sacraments in themselves are effective for salvation. Grace comes from the giver and actual liturgist of the sacraments, Jesus Christ, who remains in the Church forever and continues his work through it, and it is bestowed by the Holy Spirit who is effective in the celebration of the sacraments. In order that the sacraments accomplish their salutary purpose, people must express their inner readiness to receive them.

10. The liturgists of the Church are necessary for the celebration of the sacraments. These are the bishops and priests who assume this task through the sacrament of ordination. The efficacy of the sacraments is not invalidated by the imperfection or unworthiness of the liturgists.

11. It is the Triune God who performs the Holy Sacraments as well as the whole work of salvation: “The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit administer all things, the priest lends his tongue and makes his hand available” (John Chrysostom, hom. 87.4/86.4 in Jo. – PG 59.472; cf. also the same, hom. 2.4 in 2 Tim. – PG 62.612; Augustine, tract. 6.7 in Jo. – PL 35.1428).

*In the view of the Joint Orthodox–Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on “The Sacraments or Mysteries of the Church” represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.*

*Amersfoort, October 3, 1985*

*Signatures*

## *V/2 Baptism*

1.1 Baptism is that God-given sacrament of the Church through which the one baptized in the name of the Holy and Life-giving Trinity becomes a member of the Church of Christ, is freed from the dominion of sin and is born again to a new creature in Christ by partaking of the mystery of the divine work of salvation in Christ.

1.2 The necessity of the sacrament of Baptism, already prefigured in the Old Testament, was proclaimed by Jesus Christ by his baptism in the Jordan as well as by his commission to the Apostles to make all nations disciples by “baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt. 28:18–20). Without being born again of water and the Spirit man cannot enter the Kingdom of God (Jn. 3:5).

1.3 According to the tradition of the ancient undivided Church, the believer who is submerged in consecrated water and emerges three times in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is buried with Christ and rises with him (cf. Col. 2:12; Rom. 6:3–5).

1.4 The physical elements with which the sacrament of Baptism is carried out and through which God’s almighty grace works in the baptized cannot be regarded as mere symbols or changeable external material elements of the ecclesiastical practice of Baptism passed on by the Apostles. They are connected with the event in which the baptized is washed clean of original sin and personal sins and is renewed in Christ. In this sense, the pre-severance of the Church concerning the observance of the apostolic practice (submerging three times in consecrated water) should be understood. The practice of the undivided Church is baptism by immersion three times. Baptism by pouring water three times is also known in the Church as emergency baptism.

2.1 The baptized is reborn by the operation of divine grace and is joined with Christ in one body and enjoys the status of a child of God. By this connection to one body he is united with the faithful of all ages and nations and lives this fellowship in the Church; he becomes a citizen of the Kingdom of God and realizes his salvation in spiritual battles in the hope of partaking in the life of the world to come. Although these effects of Baptism are a gift of the Triune God and are founded in the mystery of the divine work of salvation in Christ, in order to become fruitful they assume the personal acceptance of the divine gift in faith, conversion and works of love on the part of the baptized.

2.2 Adult baptism and infant baptism effectuate the same gift of divine grace. The only difference concerns the time at which the divine grace given through Baptism can become available for the baptized and yield spiritual fruits. The fact that such spiritual fruit for adults as well as for small children is only possible in the unbroken unity with the Christian fellowship in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church makes the necessity obvious that the baptized, whether adults or small children, must be led by the Church's community; in the case of small children, the Godparents confess the faith of the Church in the name of the baptized.

2.3 Participating in the mystery of the life, death and resurrection of Christ through Baptism has as a natural and immediate consequence the possibility and necessity of the baptized partaking in the gift of the Holy Spirit poured out at Pentecost and acceding to the sacrament of Eucharist.

2.4 Baptism is administered by the bishop or a presbyter (priest) and only in emergency cases by deacons or laity.

*In the view of the Joint Orthodox–Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on “Baptism” represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.*

*Amersfoort, October 3, 1985*

*Signatures*

### *V/3 Confirmation*

1. In Baptism man is born again in the power of the Holy Spirit to life in Christ. Thereby he receives a new spiritual existence. His spiritual progress and the growth of what he has acquired through Baptism likewise require the presence and the work of the Holy Spirit. Confirmation bestows the gifts of the Holy Spirit on the baptized, allows them to take part personally in the event of Pentecost and at the same time guarantees this gift, according to the words of the Orthodox liturgy: “Seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Amen”.

2. According to the unanimous faith of the ancient and undivided Church, in the celebration of Confirmation the practice of the Apostles is carried on who laid hands on the baptized in order that the Holy Spirit come upon them (cf. Acts 8:14–17; 19:1–7). In order that the new life of man in Christ may grow Confirmation immediately fol-



lowed Baptism, as is witnessed to by the eastern and western Fathers of the Church: “Those who are baptized in the Church are brought before the leaders of the Church and receive the Holy Spirit by our prayer and the laying on of hands and are thus perfected through the seal of God” (Cyprian of Carthage, ep. 73.9 – PL 3.1115/1160). “Spiritual sealing follows ... for after Baptism by water perfection occurs when at the bishop’s prayer the Holy Spirit is poured out” (Ambrose of Milan, sacram. 3.2.8 – PL 16.434/453). “After having bathed himself in the river Jordan and brought the waters into contact with his deity, he emerged from them and the Holy Spirit in substance came upon him, like resting on like. In the same manner to you also, after you had emerged from the pool of the sacred waters, was given the unction, the image of that wherewith Christ was anointed” (Cyril of Jerusalem, catech. 21.1 – PG 33.1088f). “The illuminated ones must be anointed with the heavenly unction after Baptism and partake of the Kingdom of Christ” (Synod of Laodicea, canon 48 – Mansi 2.571).

3. Only the bishops as those who followed in the apostolic ministry were to lay hands on the baptized in order that the gift of the Holy Spirit be transmitted to them. When the number of believers grew beyond the ability of bishops to fulfill this task, the practice of Chrismation of the baptized by presbyters developed early in the East and for a while partially in the West. The blessing of the oil of chrism though remained under the sole responsibility of the bishop (cf. Synod of Carthage a.419, canon 6 – Mansi 4.424). As a rule Confirmation was reserved for the bishop throughout most of the West; the arrangement enjoined by synods that the baptized have to be confirmed as soon as possible after their baptism points out that Baptism and Confirmation belong together by necessity. The view and practice of the ancient undivided Church requires the three sacraments of initiation – Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist – to be celebrated in conjunction with each other, for even though each is complete in itself and theologically distinguishable from the others they still belong inseparably together and form a homogeneous whole.

*In the view of the Joint Orthodox–Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on “Confirmation” represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.*

*Amersfoort, October 3, 1985*

*Signatures*

#### *V/4 Holy Eucharist*

1. The sacrament of Holy Eucharist is the focal point of the entire life of the Church. In this sacrament Christ is present in reality and essence: He offers himself in a bloodless way and shares himself with the faithful in an ever new and real representation of his bloody sacrifice on the cross offered once and for all. So the Eucharist is at the same time sacrament and real sacrifice. In this sacrament the faithful receive the Body and Blood of Christ and by it are united with him and through him with one another and take part in the power of his work of salvation that has its climax in his sacrifice on the cross and in his resurrection.

2. The Lord himself instituted the Eucharist. Before the Passover during the meal, the Lord took bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to the disciples saying: "This is my body". And he took the cup, gave thanks and gave it to them saying: "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood, the blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me" (cf. Mt. 26:26–29; Mk. 14:22–25; Lk. 22:14–23; 1 Cor. 11:23–25).

3. In bread and wine, which are consecrated and changed in the Eucharist, the Lord himself is really and truly present in a supernatural way and imparts himself to the faithful. Bread and wine are, after the consecration, the Body and Blood of Christ and not mere symbols of his body and blood. "The bread and the wine are not images of the Body and Blood of the Lord – certainly not! – but the deified Body of the Lord himself; the Lord himself said: 'This is' not the image of my body but 'my body' and not the image of my blood, but 'my blood'" (John of Damascus, f.o. 86 – PG 94.1148f). According to the proclamation of the 7th Ecumenical Synod "neither the Lord nor the Apostles and Fathers have called the bloodless sacrifice offered by the priest an image, but the Body and the Blood themselves ... before the consecration they were called images, after the consecration they are called, in an actual sense, Body and Blood of Christ; this is what they are and believed to be" (Mansi 13.265).

4. The Eucharist represents the whole work of the divine economy in Christ that has its climax in his sacrifice on the cross and in his resurrection. The eucharistic sacrifice stands in direct relationship to the sacrifice on the cross. The sacrifice of Calvary is certainly not repeatable. It happened once and for all (Heb. 7:27). But the Eucharist is much more than a symbolic image or an image that reminds us of that

sacrifice. It is the same sacrifice celebrated sacramentally. It is celebrated as a commemoration of the Lord (“Do this in remembrance of me”) and is not a mere, but a true and real commemoration and representation of Christ’s sacrifice. Before us are the Body and Blood of the Lord themselves. “That (sacrifice) we now also offer, namely the one once offered, the inexhaustible one. This happens to commemorate that which once happened; for he says ‘Do this in remembrance of me’. Not an ever different sacrifice as the (Jewish) high priest of those times, but we always offer the same one; or rather we effect a memorial of the sacrifice” (John Chrysostom, hom. 17.3 in Heb. – PG 63.131). “And as we commemorate his suffering in all our celebrations of the sacrifice – for the suffering of the Lord is the sacrifice that we offer – we may not do anything else than what he has done” (Cyprian of Carthage, ep. 63.17 – PL 4.387/398f).

5. The priest officiating at each Eucharist is the Lord himself. “You are the one who offers and is offered, who accepts and is imparted, Christ, our God” (Prayer of the Cherubic Hymn). “He is the priest; it is he himself who offers, and he himself is the offered gift” (Augustine, civ. 10.20 – PL 41.298; cf. Ambrose of Milan, enarr. 25 in Ps. 38 – PL 14.1051f/1102; the same, patr. 9/38 – PL 14.686/720). The whole eucharistic community, clergy and people, has an organic part in the performance of the eucharistic celebration. The liturgists of the sacrament are bishop and priest. The practice of the Church and the canons forbid deacons “to offer” (cf. 1st Ecumenical Synod, canon 18 – Mansi 2.676).

6. According to apostolic tradition and practice, leavened bread is used in the Eucharist. The use of unleavened bread in the West is a later practice. In addition wine is used – “the fruit of the vine” (Mk. 14: 25) – that from ancient times is mixed with water (cf. Irenaeus of Lyons, haer. 5.2.3 – PG 7.1125; Cyprian of Carthage, ep. 63 – PL 4.372–389/383–401).

7. The consecration of bread and wine in the Eucharist takes place through the entire eucharistic prayer. The words of the Lord “Take, eat ... drink ye all of it” in the eucharistic prayer, which has a consecratory character as a whole, do not themselves effect the transformation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. The transformation is effected by the Holy Spirit whose descending is being prayed for in the epiclesis.

8. After appropriate preparation all believers take part in the Eucharist; for who does not take part at the table of the Lord does not

take part in the life in Christ: “unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you” (Jn. 6:53). According to the practice of the Church prevailing since ancient times not even infants and much less children are kept away from the Eucharist. Only the unbaptized, heretics, those separated from the Church and those restrained by Church discipline for any reason are excluded from the partaking of the sacrament (cf. John of Damascus, f.o. 86 – PG 94.1153). The faithful communicate under both kinds as was the case at the Last Supper.

9. In the Eucharist the faithful are united with their Lord and with one another by the communion in his Body and Blood and together form one body. “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor. 10:17). “Because we partake in the one bread, we all become one body of Christ and one blood and members amongst each other and are thus united with Christ in one body” (John of Damascus, f.o. 86 – PG 94.1153). In union with Christ, the believer is filled with grace and with all spiritual gifts and blessings that union with Christ involves. He makes progress in spiritual life, grows in perfection and thus has the hope of resurrection to eternal life and the full participation in the glorious and blessed Kingdom of Christ.

*In the view of the Joint Orthodox–Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on “Holy Eucharist” represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.*

*Amersfoort, October 3, 1985*

*Signatures*

#### *V/5 Penance*

1. In the sacrament of Penance the sins committed by those believers who sincerely repent and confess them to a priest are forgiven. “The manifold mercy of God reaches out to a fallen mankind not only in the grace of Baptism, but the healing remedy of Penance also restores the hope of eternal life” (Leo I of Rome, ep. 108 – PL 54.1011).

2. The Lord promised the authority to forgive sins to the Apostles (Mt. 16:19; 18:18) and invested them with this authority after the resurrection: “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (Jn. 20:23). This authority was

passed on by the Apostles to their successors. On the basis of this authority, the sacrament of Penance developed as a God-given, permanent institution in the life of the Church, as is attested to by the writings of the Fathers and the liturgical and canonical tradition of the Church.

3. Administrators (liturgists) of the sacrament of Penance are the bishop and those priests authorized by him.

4. Sincere hearty repentance and confession to a priest are indispensable for the forgiveness of sins. The original form of public penance was later replaced by a form of private confession before a priest.

5. God offers forgiveness of sins to the penitent through the priest: "What is done below by priests, God makes into a reality above; and so the Lord confirms the judgement of his servants" (John Chrysostom, sac. 3.5 – PG 48.643). "Whatever has been loosed by these keys (of the Church) on earth, has every promise of also being loosed in heaven" (Augustine, sermo 351.5/12 – PL 39.1549).

6. The priest who dispenses the sacrament of Penance may, in his pastoral judgement, impose an act of penance not only on those on whom forgiveness of sins has not yet been pronounced, but also on those who have already been forgiven. The imposition of an act of penance, as attested to in Scripture and tradition (cf. 2 Cor. 2:6–8; Apostolic Constitutions 2.16, 18, 41 – PG 1.625ff, 629ff, 696ff), aims at the spiritual improvement of the sinner and is designed to help guard against a repetition of the same sin. Penance, therefore, does not have the character of punishment but rather of a means of grace (Basil the Great, Can. 65 – PG 32.797).

7. The sacrament of Penance was instituted for all baptized who, after Baptism, committed venial or mortal sins and then demonstrated remorse for their failings. There are no sins or failings which, after repentance has been expressed, cannot be forgiven through the sacrament of Penance. "For the Lord who forgave all sins did not exclude any transgression" (Ambrose of Milan, paen. 1.2/5 – PL 16.467).

*In the view of the Joint Orthodox–Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on "Penance" represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.*

*Kavala, October 17, 1987*

*Signatures*

## V/6 *Unction*

1. During his redeeming ministry on earth our Saviour healed those who suffered from diseases of body and soul. He commissioned his disciples to do the same (cf. Mk. 6:7,13; 9:35). Following the example of the Lord and of the Apostles, the Church performs the sacrament of Unction [Anointing the sick], in which the faithful are prayed for and anointed with oil for the healing of body and soul: "We pray to you, Lord of all might and power, send forth the healing power of the Only-begotten from heaven on this oil, so that it may be to those who are anointed with it the means for driving out every form of sickness and weakness ... every form of fever and suffering, for healing grace and the forgiveness of sins, as the medicine of life and salvation for the healing and wholeness of soul, body and spirit, and for complete and total strengthening" (Serapion of Thumis, euch. 29(17).1; cf. Innocence I of Rome, ep. 25.8/11 – PL 20.560).

2. The Apostle James affirms: "Is any among you sick? Let him call for the presbyters of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (Jas. 5:14–16).

3. Anointing the sick with oil consecrated for this purpose, and prayer, are required for the performance of this sacrament. The administrators of this sacrament are the leaders of the Church, i.e. the bishop and the priests. If possible there should be, as James suggests, more than one administrator participating, although one will suffice if no more are available.

4. The fruits of this sacrament are the healing of diseases and the forgiveness of sins. Due to this twofold healing effect, the Orthodox Church also makes this sacrament available to its people in good health preparing themselves for Holy Communion; however, this does not serve as a substitute for the sacrament of Penance.

5. The sacrament of Unction is to be received by all baptized, not only those suffering from terminal conditions.

*In the view of the Joint Orthodox–Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on "Unction" represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.*

*Kavala, October 17, 1987*

*Signatures*



## *V/7 Ordination*

1. The ordained ministry (*ordo*) is a fundamental institution in the life of the Church and has its origin and continuing basis in the commissioning of the Apostles by the resurrected Lord who bestowed on them the Holy Spirit for the fulfillment of their mission. This ministry must be understood in connection with apostolic succession (cf. Commission Text III/7), through which the saving work of Christ in the Church continues. The New Testament witnesses that through prayer and the laying on of hands the Apostles transmitted to other men the authority conferred on them and that through this prayer and laying on of hands the latter were granted by God the gifts of grace necessary for the spiritual office (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6–14; 2:2; Acts 14:23; 20:28–32).

2. That special apostolic characteristic, namely the apostolic ministry itself as a service to the entire Church which the Apostles embody as universal shepherds of the Church, is not part of the authority of the office of bishop received from the Apostles in the consecration as bishop. No single bishop has received this apostolic office for himself on the basis of [apostolic] succession, but rather, all bishops share in the apostolicity in and through the Church.

3. In spite of a certain degree of unclarity in the vocabulary used, the ordained ministry as a special spiritual function appears quite early in the form of bishop, priest (presbyter) and deacon. The bishop as teacher, liturgist and shepherd of the local Church under his guidance, guards and preserves its unity and the truth of its teaching. Since he possesses the fullness of ordained ministry, he also performs all sacramental acts and other liturgical functions, and exercises the work of shepherd in all its fullness. The priests (presbyters) support the bishop by performing the sacraments (with some specific exceptions) and other liturgical functions and participate in the proclamation of the Gospel and the spiritual instruction of the faithful. The deacons assist the bishop and the priests (presbyters) in the performance of sacraments, participate in social ministries and assist in the work of the Church in general.

4. Except for the as yet not fully understood arrangement of deaconesses, the undivided Church did not permit the ordination of women.

5. The candidate who has been determined to be worthy for ordained ministry is ordained by the bishop, with prayer and the laying on of hands, in a eucharistic gathering of the Church, whereby the

bishop prays, together with the clergy and the faithful gathered, that the grace of the Holy Spirit who heals what is sick and supplies what is lacking, may descend on the ordinand. The practice attested to in the “Apostolic Tradition” of Hippolytus (c. 7f) and known only in the West that the priests (presbyters) present lay their hands on the head of the ordinand together with the bishop is a sign of their union with the bishop and their approbation of the admission of the ordinand to their collegium. This is not intended to raise any doubt about the full and exclusive authority of the bishop in matters of ordination. The prayer of the entire congregation and the approbation expressed in this prayer also demonstrates the cooperation and participation of all the people.

6. The divine grace received in Ordination grants the authority for a particular service in the proclamation of the Gospel, in the liturgical-sacramental life of the Church and in the gathering and upbuilding of the faithful. This service has differing form and purpose depending on whether it is performed by a bishop, a priest (presbyter) or a deacon. The gift of ordained ministry granted in the grace of ordination has a threefold purpose because it continues the three-fold ministry of the Lord in the Church: the kingly, the sacerdotal and the prophetic.

7. The efficacy of the sacraments administered by those in ordained ministry is not dependent on their personal holiness or unworthiness, “for it is God who sanctifies us in his mysteries” (John Chrysostom, hom. 8.1 in 1 Cor. – PG 61.69).

*In the view of the Joint Orthodox–Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on “Ordination” represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.*

*Kavala, October 17, 1987*

*Signatures*

#### *V/8 Marriage*

1. Marriage is an institution given by God. It was founded by God at creation as a fellowship of love and for the mutual support of husband and wife (Gen. 2:18), then reaffirmed by the Lord (Mt. 19:4–6) and blessed by his presence at the wedding at Cana (Jn. 2:1–11).

God created man as male and female (Gen. 1:27) and placed their common life under his special protection and blessing. Already under

the Old Covenant the marital union represents a characteristic image of the union between God and his people. Under the New Covenant, marriage, in which union man and woman are bound together in mutual love and in faith, represents as an image the great mystery of the love and unity which exists between Christ and the Church he founded (cf. Eph. 5:32).

2. In his blessing of the first human couple God has associated the propagation of children with marriage: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen. 1:28). In bringing children into the world and raising them in the “discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4), man has become a partner of God in continuing God’s work of creation. Through children, man experiences the gift of fatherhood and motherhood and, together, spouses and children form a family which is a kind of a small church, the house church.

Marriage is the mystery of love par excellence (cf. John Chrysostom, *laud. Max.* 3 – PG 51.230). It fulfills its purpose as a fellowship of love of spouses, not only by bearing children and sharing life (cf. Eph. 5:25; 1 Sam. 1:8). This love and unity between spouses as the principal purpose of marriage is achieved when they remain in the grace of the Holy Spirit.

3. The Church, which has blessed marriage since ancient times, “so that it responds to the Lord and not to lust” (Ignatius of Antioch, *Polyc.* 5.2 – PG 5.724), is not simply giving its blessing to the natural union of man and woman, but rather is uniting the new couple in the eucharistic fellowship and thereby placing the marriage in the context of the mystery of the Church. The consent of the bridal couple is indispensable for marriage which is concluded as a sacrament by the blessing of a lawfully ordained minister.

4. The sanctity of marriage and the spiritual character of the union and fellowship of persons in a marriage blessed according to the pattern of the union between Christ and his Church is the basis for the Church’s conviction that marriage is a life-long union and indissoluble. The Lord proclaimed the sanctity and indissolubility of marriage (Mt. 19:6), but admitted the possibility of its dissolution for reasons of adultery (Mt. 5:32; 19:9). The Apostle Paul says that a second marriage after the death of a spouse is permissible, although he expresses his preference that widowed persons not marry again (1 Cor. 7:39).

In the strict sense, therefore, a marriage cannot be dissolved for reasons other than adultery or the death of one of the spouses; but the Church, out of forbearance and love for people, acknowledges other,

analogous reasons. In its pastoral care the Church is guided by divine commandment and the divine disposition to forgive as it deals with marriages which have failed due to human shortcomings.

5. In its pastoral care the Church emphasizes the fact that husband and wife are equally (cf. 1 Cor. 7:3f; Eph. 5:21–33; 1 Pet. 3:1–7) responsible for the grace which is theirs in marriage as well as in their vocation to glorify God also in their bodies (1 Cor. 6:12–20; cf. also Heb. 13:4).

6. Marriage and ordination are not mutually exclusive. The ancient Church allowed the ordinand a free choice between marriage and celibacy and forbade only widowed persons from marrying after ordination. With regard to marriage after ordination, the tradition of the ancient Church held the “promise of celibacy” at ordination as an impediment to marriage. Marriage and celibacy are not placed in opposition to each other nor do they abrogate each other. They represent parallel paths of Christian perfection.

*In the view of the Joint Orthodox–Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on “Marriage” represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.*

*Kavala, October 17, 1987*

*Signatures*

## VI. Eschatology

### *VI/I The Doctrine of the Last Things*

#### 1. The Church and the End Time

Christian life points toward the Kingdom of God and the return of the Lord in glory. The faith of the Apostles that “here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come” (Heb. 13:14), and that “the form of this world is passing away” (1 Cor. 7:31), determines the content of Christian hope and produces a sense for the transitory and provisional nature of this world. The Church has always emphatically clung to the eschatological hope and thereby has stamped the character of the life of the faithful.

Eschatological hope is no empty experience, since the end time has already commenced in the midst of the life of the Church, which represents the continued unfolding reality of the Kingdom of God in historical time. The resurrection of Christ already ushers in his return in glory, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit inaugurates the last times which Joel prophesied (Joel 3:1–5; Acts 2). The Christian lives in the period of time between Pentecost and the Second Coming of the Lord as on the “eighth day of creation”. We in the Church receive through the sacraments and the other divine means of grace the pledge of the Spirit, in the hopeful anticipation of the joyous experience of the whole which is yet to come.

Therefore the Christian does not press forward as though rejecting the experience of this world, but rather bears witness to God’s love through activity in this world; beyond that, however, he desires to enjoy something even greater: “We ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (Rom. 8:23). “We do not reject the present, but we strive for the greater” (John Chrysostom, hom. 14.6 in Rom. – PG 60.531). For Christians, death has laid aside its terrible mask. For them it is the passage from the transitory to the eternal, the corruptible to the incorruptible. The day on which martyrs and saints died is the day on which the Church celebrates their birthday in the other life.

#### 2. Life after Death

Death, which is a consequence of Adam’s sin, concludes the period of trial and spiritual progress for man. This is why the New Testament

and the Fathers of the Church warn the faithful not to disregard God's grace as long as they live. After death there will no longer be an opportunity for salvation, only judgement and scrutiny of past deeds will follow (cf. 2 Cor. 6:2; Gal. 6:10; Basil the Great, moral. 1.2, 5 – PG 31.700f, 704).

Men will be judged by God immediately after death on the basis of their deeds performed during their lifetime (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10; 11:15; Rom. 2:5–11): The righteous and the saints will be brought near to God; sinners, however, will be led far from God to Hades, as depicted in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk. 16:19–31). “While waiting for the final judgement the souls of the faithful wait in a finer place, the sinners and evil ones in a worse place” (Justin Martyr, dial. 5.3 – PG 6.488). The honour which the Church accords the Saints rests on the belief that they are already in God's presence and, in a certain sense, are already enjoying the divine glory, the full enjoyment of which at the general resurrection at the Last Day they still await. Prayers to the Mother of God and the Saints to intercede for us with God in whose presence they live and are continuously heard by him rest on the same assumptions. The supplication of the Saints contributes to God's mercy being bestowed on the living. This forms a strong and perpetual bond between the Church militant and the Church triumphant.

Even though believing and teaching that, after death, it is not possible for those in the ranks of the sinners to cross over to join the righteous, the Church, following an ancient tradition, celebrates Eucharist in the faith, and with the hope, that God will remember those fallen asleep in mercy; it also conducts memorial services and commends acts of charity to the faithful. This gives expression to the loving fellowship between the living and those who have already passed on, together with the hope of one's own resurrection. “We believe that the prayer will be a very great advantage to those on whose behalf it has been brought” (Cyril of Jerusalem, catech. 23.9 – PG 33.1116f).

### 3. The Resurrection of the Dead and the Renewal of the World

The entire divine plan of salvation will find its historical fulfillment in the coming of the Lord in glory. The resurrection of the dead and the renewal of the world will accompany the Lord's appearance. These are fundamental truths of the faith as they are contained in the creeds of the ancient Church. The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed declares of Christ that “He will come again with glory, to judge the living



and the dead,” and concludes with an expectation of resurrection: “We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.”

The moment of the Second Coming of the Lord is unknown (Mk. 13:32); therefore the Church admonishes the faithful always to be prepared and to watch, for the Day of the Lord is coming as a thief in the night, at an hour when no one is expecting him (Mk. 13:33–37; Mt. 24:42–44; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10). The Church has rejected all attempts to determine the exact moment of the Lord’s return.

The final judgement will be preceded by the resurrection of the dead and the renewal of the world. The return of the Lord coincides with the transformation of all mankind and the world from a condition of corruption to one of incorruption (cf. 1 Cor. 15:51f; 1 Thess. 4:17). The bodies of those who have already fallen asleep will be raised and indestructibly reunited with their souls in that intimate relationship which it had enjoyed earlier; the bodies of the living will be transformed and creation will be renewed (cf. Rom. 8:19–22; 2 Pet. 3:13). The Church believes that the resurrected bodies will be like that of their glorified Lord (cf. also John Chrysostom, *delic.* 6 – PG 51.352).

All will experience the resurrection of the body, so that they may appear before the Lord with body and soul reunited and after the final judgement enjoy either blessedness or eternal damnation. The eternal happiness of the righteous as well as the eternal punishment of the wicked is a constant teaching of Holy Scripture and the Fathers of the Church.

Our daily prayer for the coming of his Kingdom will be fulfilled at the return of Christ, as is attested in the Book of Revelation: “I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away ... and death shall be no more ... and he who sat upon the throne said: Behold, I make all things new” (Rev. 21:1–5).

*In the view of the Joint Orthodox–Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on “The Doctrine of the Last Things” represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.*

*Kavala, October 17, 1987*

*Signatures*

## VII. Ecclesial Communion: Presuppositions and Consequences

1. The Church is the one Body of Christ, animated by the one Holy Spirit. In this Body, by the work of the Spirit, the faithful are bound together in the unity of faith, worship and Church order.

2. Every local Church has its centre in the Holy Eucharist. It is Christ who invites to his meal. Therefore it is celebrated by his Church under the direction of the bishop or a priest commissioned by him; and indeed it is the Church as the one Body of Christ which performs this celebration, and all who receive this Eucharist become one body, the Body of Christ. “The bread which you see on the altar, sanctified by the Word of God, is the Body of Christ. The cup, or more precisely what the cup contains, sanctified by the Word of God, is the Blood of Christ... If you have received properly you are what you have received. For the apostle says: we, the many, are one bread, one body” (Augustine, sermo 227 – PL 38.1099). “The bread which we break, is it not communion in the body of Christ? Why didn’t he (Paul) say: take part in? Because he wanted to say more than that and indicate how profound the connection is. For communicating is not only taking part and receiving a portion but also being united to. As that body is united to Christ so are we united to him through this bread... For after he said: communion in the body, he attempts to express the close connection and therefore adds: because there is one bread, we who are many are one body. What do I mean by communion (*koinōnia*)? he says. We ourselves are that body. For what is that bread? The Body of Christ! But what do those who partake become? The Body of Christ! Not many bodies, but one body... For you are not nourished from one body, but he by another, but all are fed by the same body” (John Chrysostom, hom. 24.2 in 1 Cor. – PG 61.200f).

3. Because it is Christ who invites, the Church invites participation in the table fellowship. This connects participants to the Church’s task of proclaiming the Gospel, building up the Body of Christ and preserving its unity in true faith and in love.

4. As being admitted into the Church does not occur without confession of the true faith, so the Eucharist is not celebrated as the centre of the Church without the true faith. The Christ of the sacraments is none other than the Christ of faith whom the Church has confessed at all times and in all places with unanimity.

5. Fellowship includes the entire life of the Church. Therefore it is said about the members: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’

teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). Saint Ignatius wrote: “...gather together, all of you, each and every one of you without exception, experiencing a common grace, in one faith, and in Jesus Christ, of David’s lineage according to the flesh, Son of man and Son of God, to obey the bishop and the presbyterium with undivided allegiance, breaking one bread, which is the medicine of immortality, antidote to death, a gift which supports life in Jesus Christ for evermore” (Ignatius of Antioch, Eph. 20.2 – PG 5.661).

6. The Supper of the Lord can no longer be celebrated together where fellowship is broken. The re-establishment of eucharistic fellowship during continuing separation in faith is in itself a contradiction since, in spite of common reception of the Eucharist, the Churches will continue to live in separation from one another. Such behavior will accept the existence of separated Churches as normal and then may lead to the sense that the sorrow and remorse necessary to overcome separation are, in fact, superfluous. Indeed eucharistic fellowship is an expression of fellowship in the faith of the one Church.

7. Whenever fellowship is broken the Church has the responsibility to heal the wound. The re-establishing of fellowship is not possible outside of the one Body of Christ because the unity of faith and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is given only in this Body. In order to re-establish fellowship it is necessary not only to check carefully whether we are close enough to each other but also whether the differences are so significant that separation must continue to exist.

8. The consequence and expression of reciprocally recognized fellowship in the faith is the full liturgical-canonical communion of Churches, the realization of organic unity in the one Body of Christ. The liturgical and canonical consequences, which result from ecclesial fellowship, will be elucidated and regulated by the Church on the basis of the tradition of the undivided Church. This fellowship does not signify uniformity in liturgical order and ecclesial practice, but rather embodies an expression of the fact that the historically legitimated development of the one faith of the ancient and undivided Church is preserved in each of the participating Churches. This fellowship also does not require the subjection of one Church with its tradition to the other Church, for this would contradict the reality of the fellowship. The Churches united in full communion will fulfill their responsibil-

ities in the world not isolated from each other, but on principle together.

*In the view of the Joint Orthodox–Old Catholic Theological Commission, the above text on “Ecclesial Communion: Presuppositions and Consequences” represents the teaching of the Orthodox and Old Catholic Churches.*

*Kavala, October 17, 1987*

*Signatures*