



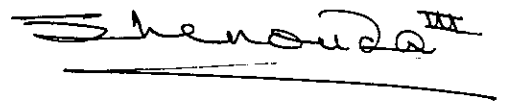
THE THIRD MEETING OF THE HEADS OF THE ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

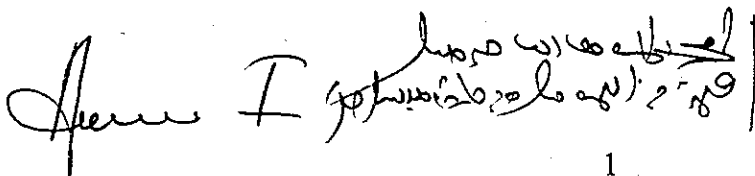
ARMENIAN CATHOLICOSATE OF CILICIA
ANTELIAS-LEBANON
MAY 4-9, 2000

COMMON DECLARATION

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

We, **Pope Shenouda III**, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark, **Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I**, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East and **Catholicos Aram I**, Catholicos of the Armenians of the Great House of Cilicia, and the members of the Standing Committee H.E. Metropolitan Bishoy, H.G. Bishop Moussa, H.E. Metropolitan Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim, H.E. Metropolitan Theophilus George Saliba, H.G. Bishop Sebouh Sarkissian and Archimandrite Nareg Alemezian, who are with us, give thanks to God for bringing us together once again in the context of this Third Meeting of the Heads of the Oriental Orthodox Churches in the Middle East, May 4-9, 2000, at the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, Antelias-Lebanon.


Shenouda III


Ignatius Zakka I

17th Centenary Celebration of Armenian Christianity

In the year 2001 the Armenian Orthodox Church will celebrate the 17th Centenary of the Proclamation of Christianity in Armenia. On the blessed occasion of this historical milestone, Pope Shenouda III and Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I extend their congratulations to Catholicos Aram I and the faithful of the Armenian Orthodox Church, and respond warmly to bring their participation in the celebrations of this great event in the life of the Armenian Church.

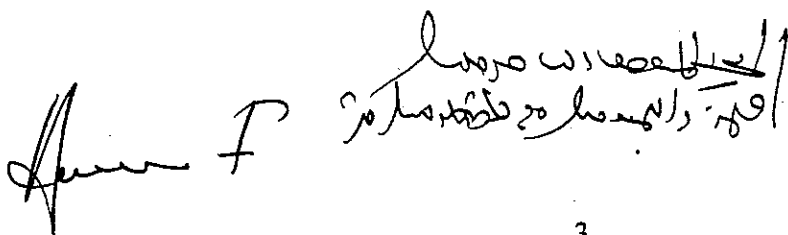
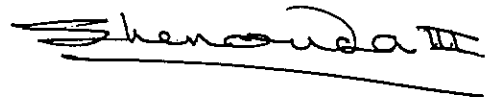
Official Theological Dialogues

(a) Oriental Orthodox Churches-Eastern Orthodox Churches

We made a general assessment of the results of the 15 years-long Official Theological Dialogue between the Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Orthodox Churches, and underlined the necessity of its continuation aimed at the full communion of these two families of Orthodox Tradition.

In response to the invitation of His Holiness Alexy I, Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, addressed in a letter to Pope Shenouda III dated April 12, 2000 to initiate a bilateral dialogue with the Coptic Orthodox Church and then the Oriental Orthodox Churches, we thought that it is more appropriate to continue in a more organized way the Official Theological Dialogue between the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox families. Meanwhile, we welcome mutual pastoral visits with the clear understanding that they should not be selective and include all the Churches of the Oriental and Eastern Orthodox families.

We welcomed the pastoral agreement reached between the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria and the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and all Africa regarding the mutual recognition of the sacraments of holy matrimony blessed in their respective churches in case of mix marriages.



(d) Oriental Orthodox Churches-World Alliance of Reformed Churches

The first phase of this official dialogue will end in January 2001 by the meeting of the Commission at the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia. In light of our theological discussions with WARC in the last seven years, we found it important to continue this Dialogue if they would take the same position. It is however important that a new agenda, procedures and guidelines be set for the next period.

World Council of Churches and the "Special Commission for Orthodox Participation in the World Council of Churches"

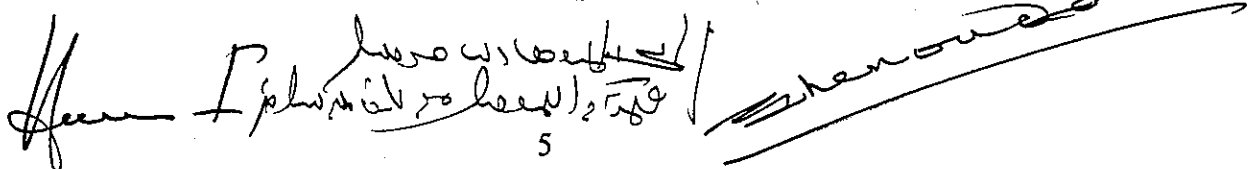
We expressed our deep satisfaction for the active participation of our Churches in the global ecumenical movement through the World Council of Churches. Ms. Teny Pirri-Simonian, Executive Secretary of Church & Ecumenical Relations and the official representative of the WCC to this Meeting, reported on the new programmatic framework, priorities and activities of the WCC in general, and the work of the "Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the World Council of Churches" in particular. She underlined the positive impact of the Annual Meetings of the Heads of the Oriental Orthodox Churches in the Middle East on the ecumenical movement and particularly on the Orthodox Churches-WCC relationship and cooperation.

We re-affirmed our commitment to the ecumenical movement through the World Council of Churches and our serious engagement in the work of the Special Commission that aims at a greater Orthodox participation and role in the WCC.

Middle East Council of Churches

We also expressed our deep satisfaction for the significant role that our Churches are playing in the Middle East Council of Churches.

Rev. Riad Jarjour, the General Secretary of the MECC, extended his thanks for the full and continuous support of the three Heads to the ongoing work of the Council and reported on the programmatic activities of the

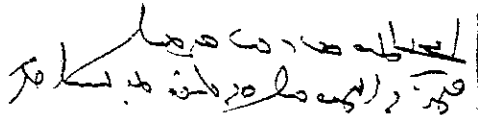
The block contains handwritten signatures and a date stamp. On the left, there is a signature that appears to be 'H. P. ...'. In the center, there is a date stamp '15/09/2000' with the number '5' written below it. On the right, there is a long, sweeping signature that appears to be 'Shenouda III'.

The Standing Committee will coordinate and supervise the work of these three Sub-Committees, and report back to us.

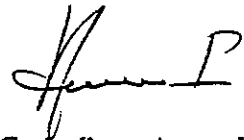
At the end of our Third Meeting, we give thanks to the Almighty God who has guided us in our deliberations and decisions. We ask Him to sustain our endeavors for the unity of the churches and the salvation of the world.

We thank the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia for its love and kind hospitality. We also thank all who prayed and assisted us for the success of this meeting.

Glory be to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

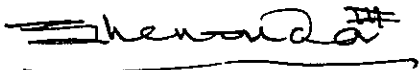


Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I



Catholicos Aram I

Pope Shenouda III



May 9, 2000

Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia
Antelias-Lebanon

