

The Melkite Church at the Council

**Discourses and Memoranda of Patriarch Maximos IV
and of the Hierarchs of His Church
at the Second Vatican Council**

Introduction by Archimandrite Robert F. Taft

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Introduction

L'Eglise Grecque Melkite au Concile (The Melkite Greek Church at the Council) was the original title of this book, first published in French in 1967. Then as now, twenty-five years later, it would be difficult to imagine a book of this title about the role of any other Eastern Catholic Church at Vatican II. At that time no other Eastern Church in communion with Rome had as yet played any significantly “Eastern” leadership role in the wider Catholic Church. In the case of the Ukrainian and Romanian Catholic Churches, this was prevented by persecution. In the case of other Churches, their insignificant numbers or the vagaries of their history rendered any such corporate role unlikely, though outstanding individual bishops from these Churches, such as Ignatius Ziade, Maronite Archbishop of Beirut, and Isaac Ghattas, Coptic Catholic Bishop of Luxor-Thebes, gave eloquent voice to the aspirations of these Churches too. But if size or persecution explains why other Churches played no notable corporate role at Vatican II, this does not explain why the Melkite Church did.

To what, then, can one attribute the remarkable role of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church at the Council? In his Preface to the 1967 French edition of this volume, Patriarch Maximos IV attributes it, first, to the fact that the Catholic Melkites had never lost contact with their Orthodox roots, and thus never became closed in on themselves. This allowed them to discern what is essential (i.e., Catholic) from what is contingent (i.e., Latin) in Catholicism, enabling them at Vatican II to witness to a *pensee complementaire*, another, complementary way of seeing things, as a counterbalance to Latin Catholic unilateralism. Maximos IV also offers a second reason: the synodal cohesion of the Melkite hierarchy (at that time the patriarch with sixteen bishops and four general religious superiors) in its pre-conciliar discussions preparatory to Vatican II, and the consequent unity of its voice at the Council. We see this exemplary Eastern conciliarity from the start, in the letter of August 29, 1959, accompanying the first Melkite response to the Preparatory Commission of the Council: “We have believed it more useful to give our proposals together, in common...” This was collegiality *ante factum*, long before the later work of the Council had made this ecclesiology common coin.

With the advantages of hindsight, I would suggest adding to Maximos’ list three other reasons that facilitated Melkite leadership at Vatican II: 1) education; 2) courageous, intelligent, innovative leadership; 3) imaginative and universal vision. None of these can be considered traditional clerical virtues. By training and tradition, the clergy are more inclined to conservatism, obedience, regularity, stability, the attributes of any social organization, where too much imagination is a liability, and routine is prized above initiative.

First, education – All of us are at once the beneficiaries as well as the victims of our background and training. Eastern Catholicism is often criticized, sometimes exaggeratedly, for its “Westernization,” an accusation, every honest person must admit, that contains some truth. This Westernization has brought with it obvious disadvantages, specifically a certain erosion of the Eastern heritage.

But every coin has two sides, and contact with the “West,” a term some Orthodox writers use like a “four-letter word,” has also had decided advantages. It is “Western” culture that

invented “modernity” with its traditional values of pluralism, civility, respect for individuals and their rights, and an intellectual, artistic and cultural life that strives to be free of outside restraint or manipulation, and seeks to be objective, even-handed, and fair. These ideals may not always be realized, but in the West they are at least ideals, and one cannot always say the same for the Christian East, where it is not uncommon even for representatives of the intellectual elite to engage in the most grotesque caricatures of the Christian West. But from that same bugaboo one can learn the “Western” secular values of intellectual honesty, coherence, consistency, self-criticism, objectivity, fairness, dialogue; moderation and courtesy of tone and language even when in disagreement; and a reciprocity which, eschewing all “double-standard” criticism, applies the same criteria and standards of judgment to one’s interlocutor and his thought and actions that one applies to one’s own. Such “Western” values lead to cultural openness and the desire to know the other. Just look at the endless list of objective, positive, sympathetic—yes—“Western” studies and publications on the Christian East, its Fathers, its spirituality, its liturgy, its monasticism, its theology, its history. How preferable this is to the ghetto-like insularity, the smug self-satisfaction of those convinced they have nothing to learn from anyone else!

So a dose of the “West” can be good medicine for the East, and Melkite bishops at Vatican II, imbued with what was best in the superb postwar French Catholic intellectual tradition, speaking French fluently and thus accessible to personal contacts and dialogue, were enabled to understand and appreciate what was happening in the Catholic Church in a way they never could have done with a simplistic caricature-image and paranoid rejection of the “West.” That is why the Melkites at Vatican II were repeatedly called a “bridge” between East and West: they knew both sides of the river and could mediate between them. Those who would deny this should remember that it is a question here of the lived experience of the Catholic Church, and only Catholics can judge that. So if Eastern Catholics at Vatican II were not a bridge between Orthodoxy and Rome—and only the Orthodox can decide that—Catholics experienced them to be a bridge that allowed the voice of the East to be heard at the Council sessions.

Of the other qualities, courageous, intelligent, innovative leadership was not proper to the Melkite bishops alone but shared by all the great progressive leaders of Vatican II, to the discomfiture of the conservative minority and the astonished admiration of the rest of the world. Peculiar to the Melkites, however, was the disproportion between their conciliar leadership and their numbers, a patriarch and a mere sixteen bishops awash in a Latin sea.

Equally unique to the Melkite Council Fathers as a group was the truly remarkable imaginative and universal vision they showed. Altogether too often, Eastern Christians think only within their own frame of reference, address only their own problems, protest only against injustices done to them, further only their own interests. Not so the Melkites. In addition to being among the first to state categorically that the Council should avoid definitions and condemnations, the list of important items of general import on the Vatican II and post-conciliar agenda that the Melkite bishops first proposed is simply astonishing: the vernacular, eucharistic concelebration and communion under both species in the Latin liturgy; the permanent diaconate; the establishment of what ultimately became the Synod of Bishops held periodically in Rome, as well as the Secretariat (now Pontifical Council) for Christian Unity; new attitudes and a less

offensive ecumenical vocabulary for dealing with other Christians, especially with the Orthodox Churches; the recognition and acceptance of Eastern Catholic communities for what they are, “Churches,” not “rites.”

But for the Melkites, perhaps none of the above qualities would have “worked” without the audacious yet unfailingly courteous courage of Maximos IV and his close collaborators. I first encountered this in 1959, I think it was, just after returning from three years teaching in Baghdad. I was doing Russian studies at Fordham University in New York, preparing for theological studies and ordination in the Byzantine-Slavonic Rite. With barely repressible glee the late Father Paul Mailleux, S.J., then superior of the Byzantine Jesuit Community of the Russian Center at Fordham, showed me a copy of a letter Maximos IV had sent to an American cardinal. For some time the Byzantine Rite Jesuits of that community had, on occasion, been following the lead of the U.S. Melkites in celebrating the Byzantine Divine Liturgy in English, in accordance with the age-old principle of the Byzantine Churches to use whatever language, vernacular or not, was deemed pastorally most suitable in the circumstances. The cardinal had written Patriarch Maximos to challenge this practice, surely not because of any special concern for the East, but, as with the issue of married clergy, from fear of “contamination.” This was before the vernacular debate at Vatican II, and if U.S. Catholics were exposed to Eastern Catholic Eucharists, especially in their own parish churches on the *dies orientales* or “Oriental Days” held in those years to acquaint Western Catholics with the East, they might be led to the ineluctable conclusion that vernacular liturgy was not only possible, but a good thing.

Here as elsewhere, Melkite attitudes and usage were prophetic, and the cardinal’s fears real. Maximos IV, fully conscious of being an Eastern patriarch and not some curial dependent, responded with dignity and courtesy, but with great firmness and unambiguous clarity, that the liturgical languages of the Byzantine Church were none of His Eminence’s business. It is of such stuff that leaders are made. And prophets too. For it is thus that in North America, Melkites and others, celebrated Catholic Eucharistic liturgies in English long before anyone ever heard of Vatican II.

But Maximos IV did not stand alone at Vatican II. He was the first to acknowledge the synodal, collegial nature of the Melkite enterprise, and other major Melkite council figures like Archbishops Elias Zoghby, Neophytos Edelby, Peter Medawar, and our own Archbishop Joseph Tawil, also made the trenchant and eloquent “Voice of the East” heard at Vatican II.

In this same context I must mention one of my own heroes, Archimandrite Oreste Kerame (+1983), who, though not a bishop, was a major source of Melkite thought at Vatican II. A former Jesuit, he left the order in 1941, in the name of a higher fidelity, when it was not so easy to be a member of a Latin religious order and at the same time a convinced ecumenist totally dedicated to preserving and living the traditions of the Christian East. In long conversations in French with him in his later years, I had confirmed what had always been a guiding principle of my own double vocation as an Eastern Rite member of a Latin religious order: whenever there is a conflict, real or apparent (i.e., so perceived by superiors), between the demands of my rite and those of the order, the rite, an ecclesial reality superior to the contingent customs of any religious

order, congregation, or monastery, must always take precedence. Fortunately, the problem has never arisen for me in any substantive way, for times have changed since the early 1940s. The December 25, 1950, letter and decree of the Jesuit General John Baptist Janssens, *Pro ramo orientali Societatis Iesu* (On The Eastern Branch of the Society of Jesus), can be considered the Magna Carta of Eastern-Rite Jesuits. It legislates explicitly that they are to live their rite in its integrity, and elements of the Jesuit Institute that by nature pertain to the Latin Rite do not apply to them. Kerame, whose love for the Society of Jesus never lessened in spite of the painful choice he was forced to make, not only lived long enough to witness this greater openness in the Catholic Church. His life and thought prepared for it.

But when all is said and done, our basic point of reference will always remain the great figure of Patriarch Maximos IV and the role he played in his own and the broader Church during the twenty critical years (October 30, 1947-November 5, 1967) of his historic patriarchate. Among the dozen or so most quoted Council Fathers in the published histories of Vatican II, he gave from the start a hitherto unimaginable importance to the Eastern Catholic minority at the Council by the content and *elan* of his interventions. The legendary Xavier Rynne first brought him to the attention of Americans in his gripping account of Session I serialized in *The New Yorker*, awakening the Western mass-media to the importance of this hitherto ignored minority. Rynne described Maximos as “the colorful and outspoken Melchite patriarch, His Beatitude Maximus IV Saigh, of Antioch,” and spoke of His Beatitude’s conciliar interventions as “laying the cards squarely on the table as was his custom, and speaking in French, as was also his habit.”

At Session I of the Council, Maximos’ electrifying opening speech on October 23, 1962, set the tone for the Melkite onslaught on the one-sided, Latin vision of the Church. He refused to speak in Latin, the language of the Latin Church, but not, he insisted, of the Catholic Church nor of his. He refused to follow protocol and address “Their Eminences,” the cardinals, before “Their Beatitudes,” the Eastern patriarchs, for in his ecclesiology patriarchs, the heads of local Churches, did not take second place to cardinals, who were but second-rank dignitaries of one such communion, the Latin Church. He also urged the West to allow the vernacular in the liturgy, following the lead of the East, “where every language is, in effect, liturgical.” And he concluded, in true Eastern fashion, that the matter at any rate should be left to the local Churches to decide. All this in his first intervention at the first session! No wonder numerous Council Fathers, overcoming their initial surprise, hastened to congratulate him for his speech. And no wonder it hit the news. That was a language even journalists impervious to the torturous periods of “clericalese” could understand. Maximos spoke simply, clearly, directly—and he spoke in French.

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Has the post-conciliar Melkite Church lived up to its promise at Vatican II? Indeed, have any of us? Ideals always have a head start on reality—that is why we call them ideals, something not yet fully attained, that towards which we strive. So it is natural that certain Melkite ideas advanced at the Council remain undeveloped and unrealized in the Catholic Church: the principle that collegiality should be operative not just among bishops, but on the diocesan level, between the bishop and his presbyterate;

that the laity, especially women, should be given their proper dignity and role in church life; that adequate hierarchical provision be made, as a pastoral right and not as a concession dependent on the good will of anyone, for the pastoral care of Eastern Catholics in the diaspora; that a more supple, nuanced view, like that of the Orthodox Churches, be allowed regarding the remarriage of unjustly abandoned spouses; that the problem of the date of Easter be resolved in ecumenical agreement with other Churches; that the Roman Curia assume its proper place within a healthy ecclesiology, no longer operating as a substitute for the apostolic college of bishops, or pretending to possess and exercise incommunicable powers which belong by divine right to the supreme pontiff alone, and cannot be delegated to or arrogated by anyone else.

As for the Melkite Church itself, there can be no denying that Melkites, like many others, are often better at giving speeches and making proposals than at observing them. Even before the Council, Melkite rhetoric and Melkite reality have often been miles apart.

So much work remains to be done. May this welcome translation of an historic book be a stimulus to getting on with it.

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Notes

1. Cited in "Vatican II: 25 ans apres," *Le Lien* 55.1-2 (janvier-avril 1990) 37.
2. Further documentation in N. Edelby, "The Byzantine Liturgy in the Vernacular," in Maximus IV Sayegh (ed.), *The Eastern Churches and Catholic Unity* (New York: Herder & Herder 1963) 195-218.
3. X. Rynne, *Letters from Vatican City* (London: Faber & Faber 1963) 26, 85.
4. *Ibid.*, 102-5.

Preface

At the Second Vatican Council, which has just ended, our Melkite Greek Catholic Church played a remarkable role. Aside from certain criticisms, which were useful to us, and for which we were grateful, public opinion in general has been generous in its compliments, thus encouraging in our hierarchy, in spite of the relatively limited number of its faithful and the difficult circumstances in which it exercises its ministry, the boldness of its interventions, the originality of its theological thinking, its esprit de corps, and the seriousness with which it applied itself to study the problems posed at the Council, to provide the best contribution of which it was capable.

The reasons for this outstanding role played by our Church at the Council should be sought in the providential elements of our vocation, as well as in the climate of freedom that Popes John XXIII and Paul VI gave to the deliberations of the Council.

The cornerstone of our vocation is Eastern Orthodoxy, with which we have never lost contact. At no moment of our history have we considered ourselves a closed community that has reached the final stage of its evolution. We have always reserved, in our thoughts and in our hearts, a place for those who are absent, for that Orthodoxy from which we came forth, which we have never disowned, but which we have sincerely believed would be reunited with Roman Catholicism in a union that we embraced as it was then presented concretely to us. It is only gradually, and rather belatedly, that we have made a distinction between those things that were indispensable, and thus permanent, and those which were accidental, and thus obsolete.

The concern to maintain contact with Orthodoxy has furnished us with distinctive ideas, which in fact were nourished by sources of thought that were not exclusively Western, but which always tried to draw from the living and life-giving wellsprings of Christian truth, above all by renewing contact with the Eastern Fathers, known and experienced through a liturgy in which all the thought of Catholic Orthodoxy is epitomized, and which we have tried to maintain free of all hybrid deformation. Our liturgy has certainly provided us with a great resource.

We have always refused to become “latinized,” even at times when “latinization” appeared to be a title of glory, a sign of progress, a demonstration of evolution and of openness. We have always wished to be ourselves, simply, without any lack of appreciation for the values of others, but also without an inferiority complex.

These things have enabled us, at the Council, to be witnesses of complementary ideas, just as the Council intended. The West, after centuries of unilateral evolution, had reached the limits of its theological reflection. It had arrived at extreme views, from which it could not escape without a return to biblical sources and to that other ecclesial and apostolic tradition, that of the East, in order to provide equilibrium, nuances, and wholeness. We have tried to be as effective witnesses of that other tradition as our small numbers would permit.

It would have been naturally preferable if this testimony had been put forth by our Orthodox brothers themselves, in a new “Council of Union,” which would be free, this

time, from all pressure and all purely human concerns. In the absence of a true Orthodox presence, we have wished, without claiming to represent it officially, to bring to the Council to the best of our ability a faint but faithful echo of this presence. This echo has caused surprise. It may have scandalized at times those who could not have reacted otherwise, but on the whole it has aroused interest. It helped those who were seeking escapes from the impasses, from the inflexibilities, from the excesses to which we had been led by late Scholasticism and the Counter-Reformation, and then by the absolutism of the last century. That is why the role played by our Church was notable and noticed.

Should I add to these strong reasons some motives that are rather personal? I shall only say, in praise of my brothers in the episcopate, that among the reasons for our profound influence on the Council must also be included our cohesion, that unity of action among the members of our hierarchy, working together as a synod, collegially, knowing how to surpass oneself, if necessary, or, on the contrary, to hold back in order to maintain unity of action born of a union of hearts, without, however, excluding complete freedom of thought.

This is also the place to mention the presence at our side of devoted collaborators, who made a real contribution to the success of our efforts. I am pleased to cite among them my auxiliaries, Their Excellencies Pierre-Kamel Medawar and Neophytos Edelby, and Archimandrite Oreste Kerame, my Referendary, a pioneer ecumenist of international fame, in our resource group; Archimandrite Adrian Chacour, my secretary, of unflagging zeal; Archimandrite Elias Nijme, Secretary of the Holy Synod, who accompanied me to all the sessions of the Council, and in particular served me as press attaché; and finally Reverend Michel Geday, S.J., Professor at the College of the Holy Family at Cairo, one of the most profound and discreet of our Melkite Greek Catholic theologians.

For the sake of completeness, I should point out the collaboration of many other priests of our community: university or seminary professors, historians, journalists, even if they have not directly contributed with us to the work of the Council. Laymen, too, have given us great comfort through the harmony of their thoughts with ours. Truly, the whole Melkite Greek Catholic Church hierarchy, clergy, faithful brought to the Council the witness of its spiritual patrimony.

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All this action would have been impossible apart from the atmosphere of freedom and confidence that Popes John XXIII and Paul VI created at the Council. At the First Vatican Council, our hierarchy was certainly less well prepared, but even the small amount of original thought that it would have wished to echo was suppressed by the authoritarianism that dominated that council. One now understands the humiliations undergone by my predecessor Gregory II Youssef Sayour, humiliations concerning which he had the discretion to remain silent for the rest of his life.

We owe to John XXIII and Paul VI the introduction of a new spirit in Catholic customs, an openness, a spontaneity, a humility, that one might have thought to have been forgotten. The Catholic East not only was not humiliated: without any inferiority complex, it entered with its head held high, it was welcomed fraternally, listened to with

interest, and understood favorably. For all of that, it was necessary to speak out, to raise our voices, to contend at times, but we were sure that after this effort to provide indispensable information we could count on the goodwill of the Council as a whole.

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Hardly any trace remains of the participation of our predecessors at Vatican I, at least in a form accessible to the general reader. My fellow bishops and I have thought that this time we ought not only to make sure that the history of our work will be available, when anyone wishes to write it, but also to inform our priests, our faithful, and our friends of what we were able to accomplish at the Council, by the grace of God and with their help. Some Western theologians have also insistently asked us to do this.

A long time will pass before all the interventions at the Council are published. In addition, our interventions represent only a small part of our effort. The limitation of ten minutes for each intervention did not allow our speakers to do more than outline their ideas. The remainder was sent in writing to the Secretariat of the Council. The Holy Synod, before each session of the Council, met and made detailed observations on the texts of the schemas. These observations were reproduced and distributed among the Fathers. Sometimes we wrote directly to the pope. Those of us who were members of conciliar commissions drafted long notes. We also gave numerous conferences during the Council, interviews with the press and television, etc.

These materials constitute a voluminous collection of documents. It was evident that we had to make choices. We have retained, for publication here, only those which appeared to be what one might call “official,” coming from our Fathers at the Council and addressed to the authorities of the Council: interventions at the Council, either actually spoken or sometimes sent to the Secretariat, comments of the Holy Synod, notes sent to different pre-conciliar or conciliar commissions by those of our bishops who were members, and finally official correspondence of the patriarchate or of the Synod with the Holy See of Rome, relative to questions raised at the Council or, subsequently, concerning the carrying out of the Council's decisions. All the rest has been set aside and lies in our archives.

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In addition to the texts that we are publishing in this collection, it would be easy to draw up a balance sheet of the Council on matters that concern our Church. It can be said that on the whole we obtained what we asked from the Council.

The Church was the fundamental theme of the Council; it was therefore on questions of the Church that we put forth our principal efforts. Starting with the period of the preparation for the Council, we insisted on the necessity of complementing the teaching of Vatican I on the primacy and infallibility of the Bishop of Rome by determining the nature of episcopal power, and of episcopal collegiality in particular. Vatican II can be called in a sense the “council of the episcopacy.” The doctrine of episcopal collegiality was drawn up, timidly enough it is true, but openly enough so that the forward trend of this thought is irreversible. Without this perspective of collegiality, the prerogatives of

the Bishop of Rome remain incomprehensible in the East. During the Council a certain Roman canonist published in two parallel columns our teaching on collegiality and the definitions of Vatican I, to demonstrate their opposition, and to conclude implicitly that our position should be condemned.

Unfortunately for him, the Council did not find any opposition, but instead discerned complementary ideas, and it was rather the contrary attitude that was condemned. We asked for the creation, at the Roman Curia, of a permanent bureau for ecumenical affairs. The Secretariat for Christian Unity has been founded and assured permanence. As for the new “style” which we sought in the relations between Rome and the other Churches, it is necessary to say that our hopes have been exceeded in this regard: the journey of the pope to Jerusalem, the exchange of official delegations between Rome, Constantinople, and Canterbury, the lifting of the anathemas of 1054, the presence of observers at the Council, the beginning of direct negotiations, etc. Who would have thought, as recently as ten years ago, that such things were possible?

In the preparations for the Council, we emphasized the necessity of calling on collaborators outside Roman circles. Although the preparatory commissions remained strongly influenced by the Curia, the conciliar commissions were less so, and the post-conciliar commissions even less so.

On the other hand, concerning the language of the discussions, we failed in our attempt to have the use of simultaneous translations admitted at the Council. But this failure was as good as a victory. The principle was admitted that Latin was not the language of the Church, and we insisted on speaking in a language other than Latin.

On dogmatic matters especially, we called for a halt. It was not possible, considering our small numbers, to exert a greater positive influence on the theological thought of the Council. At least we warned the theologians of the Council against the danger of considering their Western theology as the theology of the Church. The Council was alerted to this reaction on our part. Although we were not able to incorporate Eastern theology into that of the Council, we at least succeeded in making the Fathers realize that there was in the Church something besides Western theology. Eastern theology remained for the majority of the Fathers an unknown quantity, but one that was no longer automatically disregarded, and about which henceforth they wished to know more. With respect to the liturgy, we strongly supported the demands of the promoters of the reform of the Latin liturgy. Besides, the example of the Eastern Churches was often the best weapon for demolishing positions that were reputed to be impregnable and for obtaining such important reforms as the use of living languages, concelebration, Communion under both species, etc.

Regarding the setting of a unified date for Pascha, we were not able to do more than alert the Council. We made known our sadness and our confusion about the present state of affairs. The definitive solution can come only through direct negotiation among the Churches. We shall not cease to prod those in authority, for this unification of the date of the “feast of feasts” will be for us, in the Arabic Middle East, the first step towards unity.

On the questions concerning the constitution of the Church, it was nearly impossible to get the West to accept a theology of the patriarchate, which it had lived with the East, but which it had long since forgotten. We and our friends had to be content to offer very vigorous reminders, but these were lost in a sort of historic void, as the assembly could not visualize an order of values other than that to which it was accustomed. Certainly, a great step was made in restoring to the patriarchs of the East, at least externally, the honors due to them, but on the whole the patriarchate remained in the eyes of the majority of the Fathers an honor, nothing more than an honor. At least, the door is not closed. Miraculously, the Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches was able to affirm two principles, which appeared mild, but which in reality are heavy with consequences. The first affirms that the rights and privileges of the patriarchs should be re-established as they were during the thousand-year union between the East and the West; the second states that the patriarchs, with their synods, constitute the highest authority for all affairs of the patriarchate, without prejudice to the inalienable rights of the Roman pontiff. These two principles, if they are respected, contain the seed of a restoration of an order of things which could be accepted by Orthodoxy.

We insisted very strongly on a reform of the Roman Curia, in the direction of decentralization and internationalization. This reform has been decreed and will be implemented gradually. Already, the powers of bishops are no longer considered to be Roman concessions, renewable “faculties,” to be extended or limited at will. It is rather the Roman interventions that are to be considered as reservations that are exceptional, rare, and, above all, motivated by the general good of the Church.

Conciliarity, which characterizes the system of government of the Eastern Church, has inspired and sustained the establishment of episcopal conferences. Even more, we were the first to uphold in the Council the idea of a “permanent synod of bishops” surrounding the pope.

We proposed the restoration of a permanent diaconate. As for the married priesthood, which has always existed and been honored among us, we defended it against the unrealistic view which would identify priesthood and celibacy. In this sphere, we remain convinced that the example of our Eastern Church has not ceased to be useful.

We sought and obtained that the door should be no longer closed to an expanded concept of morality, to the problems of family planning and of the innocent spouse. We joined our voice to those who sought the condemnation of nuclear war and a more constructive view of the problems of modern society.

Above all, we concentrated our efforts on the situation of our own Eastern Catholic Churches. Their condition in the bosom of Catholicism has been difficult. Being victims of discrimination, their hands were tied. We sought and obtained the recognition of their absolute equality with the Latin Church with respect to rights and duties, including the right and the duty to evangelize the non-Christian world. We obtained the condemnation of latinization of the East, while leaving a latitude for personal exceptions. We saved our emigrants, by securing the recognition of their right to establish everywhere ecclesial communities and to be governed by their own hierarchy. Through the prerogatives conceded or to be conceded to patriarchs and to their synods, one can see for these

Churches, in the near future, the beginnings of a respected canonical situation, which will permit them to exist honorably while awaiting the global union of Churches, which must always remain their supreme reason for being.

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On the basis of what we have said at the Council and by what we have already obtained from it, there can be no doubt that we have cleared the terrain and laid out the road for the meeting of Orthodoxy and Catholicism. The length of the dialogue has thereby been shortened.

The anthology that I am happy to present at this time will show future generations of our Church the road that has been traveled, and the distance still to be traveled. We have laid out the path. Much remains to be done, but the forward movement has begun, and it is irreversible. There are doors which the Holy Spirit has opened and that no one will ever be able to close.

Damascus, December 25, 1966

+ Maximos IV

Patriarch of Antioch and of All-the-East
of Alexandria and of Jerusalem
Cardinal of the Holy Church