

In the Hope of Restoration of Communion between the Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches, Public Orthodox blog - [Carrie Frederick Frost](#), [Vigen Guroian](#), [Jennifer Haddad Mosher](#), and [Valerie G. Zahirsky](#)

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We wish to bring attention to one of the items not specifically included on the Great and Holy Council's agenda or in its preconciliar documents: the restoration of communion between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches. Our group is comprised of three Orthodox Christians and one Armenian Orthodox Christian, and we eagerly anticipate the day our churches will once again be united with each other.

The preconciliar document "[Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World](#)" affirms that theological dialogue is "to reclaim the lost unity of Christians," but does not acknowledge the urgency and rightness of unity with the Oriental Churches, especially in light of the dire situation of these communities in the Middle East and North Africa. This lack of reference is in contrast to an earlier version of this document from 1986, which contained a section directly addressing bilateral talks with the Oriental Orthodox Churches (Third Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference).

The current "Relations" document does not acknowledge the fact that clergy and theologians have been meeting in dialogue for the past fifty years as the "Joint Commission of the Theological Dialogue Between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches." The Oriental Orthodox Churches represented most recently in this dialogue are the Coptic, Syrian, Armenian Apostolic, and Malankara Orthodox Syrian Churches. The third official meeting of the Joint Commission (1990) affirmed that, "Both families have always loyally maintained the same authentic Orthodox Christological faith, and the unbroken continuity of the apostolic tradition." Furthermore, the Joint Commission has determined that the differences in Christology are reconcilable and has called for a process toward full communion among these churches, including the lifting of the anathemas against the Oriental churches (1990 and 1993).

A Working Group for the Joint Commission on Dialogue met in November of 2014. Co-Chairman His Eminence Metropolitan Emmanuel of France affirmed "the very high priority accorded by the Orthodox Church to the official Theological Dialogue with the Oriental Orthodox Churches." We seek for this "very high priority" to be affirmed and acted upon. The preconciliar document "Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World," states that, "The end of an official theological dialogue occurs with the completion of the relevant work of the Joint Theological Commission. This then requires the Chairman of the Inter-Orthodox Commission to submit a report to the Ecumenical Patriarch, who, with the consent of the Primates of the local Orthodox Churches, declares the conclusion of the dialogue." We look for these final steps of reconciliation with the Oriental Churches to be taken.

Three local churches from the Orthodox family (Alexandria, Antioch and Romania) and three churches from the Oriental Orthodox family (Alexandria, Antioch and Malankara-India) have

declared their acceptance of the agreed statements and proposals from the Joint Commission. Although the 2014 working group acknowledged other churches have raised issues worthy of further discussion, the decision on the part of these local churches inspires us to believe the Holy Spirit is in our midst and restored communion within our reach.

Lest the possibility of restored communion between Eastern and Oriental brothers and sisters in Christ flounder, we wish for this issue to remain in the atmosphere of the 2016 Council under the agenda item of "Relations of the Orthodox Church," in hope that a future such Council will take dramatic action for the rightful restoration of communion between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

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