

**PROTOCOL BETWEEN THE
COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH (COC)
AND THE ERITRIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH (EOC)**

INTRODUCTION

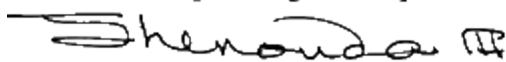
The two Churches are linked by very intimate relations since the early Centuries of Christianity, as both are sons of St. Mark the Apostle. Such link was realized when St. Athanasius the Apostolic, the 20th Pope of Alexandria, consecrated Fromentious in the year 329 A.D to be the first bishop of Eritrea and Ethiopia. He was given the name of Abba Salama and started his bishopric when he arrived first in Eritrea in the Year 330A.D. , and is venerated as a Saint.

Through the consecration of Abba Salama, the church of Alexandria established the bishop's seat for the Church of Eritrea and Ethiopia, which then became part of the SEE of SAINT MARK, the APOSTLE.

The Church of Alexandria has been consecrating and sending bishops to continue the pastoral mission of Abba Salama .

The Eritrian church expanded and now has about 1,700,000 members (One million and seven hundred thousand), 1500 churches, 22 monasteries and 15,000 priests.

On July 1993, His Excellency Isaias Afeworki, President of the State of Eritrea visited His Holiness Pope Shenouda III in his office in Cairo and conveyed the wish of the State of Eritrea, its president, the temporary Holy Synod of the Church and the people of Eritrea to have an independent Church for an independent Eritrea. His Holiness Pope Shenouda III asked to receive an Eritrian Church delegation in Cairo, representing the temporary Holy Synod, carrying an official letter to discuss the matter and future steps. This delegation met His Holiness Pope Shenouda III on 19 July 1993 and offered the official letter expressing this request.

 Shenouda III



His Holiness Pope Shenouda III wrote a letter dated 21 July, 1993 to His Grace Bishop Phillipos, the head of the EOC and Synod expressing his acceptance to form an Eritrean Synod of bishops and subsequently to ordain a new Patriarch for the EOC, thereby recognizing the EOC as an independent Church.

On 2 August 1993, the Eritrean temporary Synod in Asmara decided to follow the advice of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III expressed in his letter, and sent a letter forwarded by His Grace Bishop Philipos with a copy of the resolutions signed by the Synod.

On 11 January 1994, His Holiness Pope Shenouda III received a letter from the Eritrean Church informing him that five monk abbots had been elected to become diocesan bishops for Eritrea .


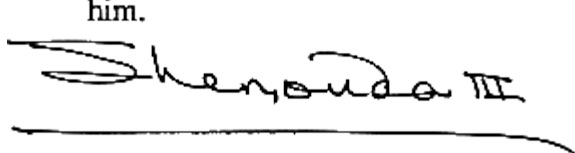
The election was under the supervision of the vice-minister of Internal Affairs of Eritrea. The names of the abbots elected were stated in that letter.

The Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church in a special meeting on 28 September 1993, approved all the arrangements with the EOC .

A Coptic delegation visited Asmara carrying a letter from His Holiness Pope Shenouda III dated 24 May 1994 to "discuss all the preparations for the ordination of the five new bishops, the place, the date, the dioceses and the enthronement of the new patriarch of the Orthodox Church of Eritrea, when and where to be ordained, and all other matters."

The delegation met the temporary Holy Synod and discussed everything and then met President Isaias.

The delegation came back from Asmara with an official letter dated 26 May 1994 carrying the names of the new bishops, their dioceses, the ordination to be in Saint Mark Cathedral in Cairo, and the ordination of the patriarch also to be in Cairo. Through negotiations, it was agreed that after the ordination of the patriarch, His Holiness Pope Shenouda III would come to Asmara to enthrone him.



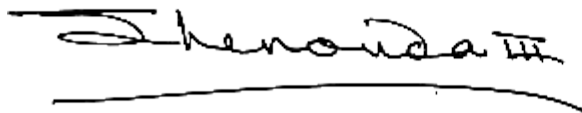
The ordination of the new five Eritrian Orthodox Bishops took place in Saint Mark Cathedral in Cairo on Pentecost of 1994, By His Holiness Pope Shenouda III and the Coptic Holy Synod in a great celebration attended by thousands of Coptic people and visitors.

Abouna Phillipos attended and participated in their ordination, and an Eritrean delegation, clergy and lay people were present. The five bishops were enthroned afterwards in their dioceses in Eritrea by the Eritrian Orthodox Church .

On 15 April 1998 His Holiness Pope Shenouda III sent His Eminence Metropolitan Bishoy to Asmara according to the request of the EOC to attend the choosing of the Patriarch . Abouna Phillipos was chosen unanimously as the only candidate by the Eritrian bishops in their Synod meeting held on 18 April, 1998 in Asmara.

On 8 May 1998, the feast of Saint Mark, Abouna Phillipos was ordained as the first patriarch of the EOC by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, Coptic and Eritrean Metropolitans and bishops, in a huge festival in the Cathedral of Saint Mark in Cairo, attended by thousands of clergy and lay people from both the COC. and the EOC.

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III together with His Holiness Patriarch Phillipos I and a Coptic Delegation will be going, God willing, to Asmara in order to enthrone the first Patriarch of Eritrea on his seat in a joyful and huge festival in Saint Mary Cathedral in Asmara, to be attended by President Isaias, Government Dignitaries, visitors and the Eritrian People .

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Shenouda III", with a long horizontal line drawn underneath it.A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Phillipos I", with a long horizontal line drawn underneath it.

This protocol was prepared and approved by the two holy Synods of the COC and the EOC.

Article 1:

The Church of Alexandria recognizes the autocephally (independence) of the EOC .

Article 2:

His Holiness the Pope of Alexandria, being the Successor of Saint Mark the Apostle, has the first position of honour, in accordance with Church traditions and the resolutions of the canonical ecumenical councils confessed by the two Churches and also due to the historical links between the two Churches, in a manner that does not belittle the independent status of the EOC.

Article 3:

The two Churches belong to the SEE of SAINT MARK and confess one Orthodox Doctrine.

Article 4:

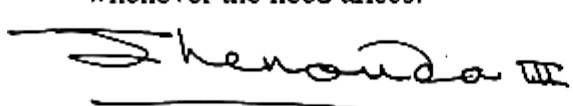

In order to manifest and affirm the spiritual relations between the two Churches, His Holiness the Pope of Alexandria and His Holiness the Patriarch of Eritrea should be mentioned in all the liturgical prayers The name of the Alexandrian Pope to be mentioned first.

Article 5:

Each Church has her own Holy Synod to care for her affairs. The resolutions of the two Synods should be exchanged regularly.

Article 6:

To assure the unity in the Apostolic Orthodox faith and Tradition, a general Holy Synod of both Churches should convene together every three years, and whenever the need arises.

Article 7:

Each Church has the liberty to chose its own Patriarch. But in order to consolidate the tight relations between the two Churches; the other Church will send a delegation comprising of ten members of the Church, two diocesan Bishops, two abbots of monasteries, and six other persons representing other categories of Church members in order to attend the election process as observers.

Article 8:

In any future consecration and enthronement of a Patriarch for either one of the two Churches, a delegation should be sent from the other Church to invite her to participate. The type of participation is to be negotiated at that time .

Article 9:

Both Churches should invite each other to participate in or observe all major occasions.

Article 10:

In meetings of theological dialogues on matters of faith with other confessions, which are not on the level of the Oriental Orthodox Family, the two Churches shall form a common delegation.

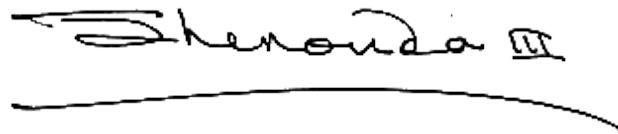
Article 11:

Both Churches are committed not to depose and replace a Patriarch or a Bishop of her own in his life time, unless his deposition is decided by the Holy Synod of his Church, through a canonical procedure.

Article 12:

A permanent joint committee is to be formed out of the members of the two Synods for the cooperation of the two Churches in various areas such as:

- (a) Exchange of visits of: Patriarchs, Metropolitans, Bishops, Abbots, Priests, Monks, Deacons, Professors, and Students should be encouraged.
- (b) Cooperation in Theological education.

 Shenouda III



- (c) Christian Education: Sunday Schools, Youth and family programs.
- (d) Social services and development projects .
- (e) Pastoral Care: Both Churches should be given the chance to extend their pastoral care to their people at each other's country.

Article 13:

The text of this protocol, being approved by both Holy Synods and signed by the Patriarchs of the two Churches, has come into effect and should be publicized and circulated to all the dioceses and parishes of both Churches

Article 14:

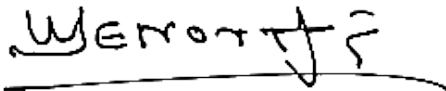
Any addition or amendments of this protocol should be discussed and approved in the joint meeting of the two Holy Synods.

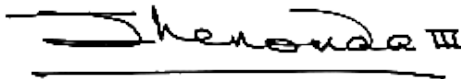
Article 15:

This protocol has been prepared in the Tigrigna, Arabic and English languages. If misunderstandings arise in matters of interpretation, the English version shall prevail.

The above protocol of fifteen articles, together with the introduction, a total of six pages (in the English version), pursuant to article thirteen of this protocol, it is hereby signed by the heads of both Churches in May, 1998.

May 8th/1998





*His Holiness Pope Shenouda III
Pope of Alexandria and
Patriarch of the See of St. Mark*



*His Holiness Abuna Phillipos
Patriarch of Eritrea*