

MELKITE GREEK CATHOLIC
PATRIARCHATE
OF ANTIOCH AND ALL THE EAST
OF AELXANDRIA AND OF
JERUSALEM



بطريركس
انطاكية وسائر المشرق
والاسكندرية واورشليم
للسرورم الملكيتين الكاثوليك

Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarchate
Cairo
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Centre for Eastern Christianity
Heythrop College, University of London

From His Beatitude Patriarch Gregorios III
Greetings for the Conference
27 November 2012

The Life and Thought of Louis Massignon (1883-1962): Comparative political and theological perspectives

From Egypt, (where I am today attending the enthronement of His Holiness, Pope Tawadros II of the Coptic Orthodox Church) and the very place where Louis Massignon exercised his mission as a Christian in love with Islam, by emphasizing the tradition of *badaliyya* or substitution, I am happy to send these greetings to your conference.

Here on 4 November our Archbishop George Bakar, Patriarchal Vicar of Egypt and Sudan, commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the repose of the Priest Louis Massignon († 31 October 1962) in the same church of Our Lady of Peace, where he had been ordained in 1950 by Bishop Boutros Kamel Medawar S.M.S.P., then Patriarchal Vicar of Maximos IV (Sayegh).

Here too lived Mary Kahil, an Egyptian Greek Catholic who had vowed with Massignon as early as 1934 to pray for Muslims and who devoted herself to Muslim women's political and social causes.

Here too they launched, with Archimandrite Xavier Eid and others, *Al Ikha ad-Dini* (a still active Muslim-Christian Fraternity). Their influence reached the Second Vatican Council. Without them the Conciliar Document *Nostra Aetate* would not have seen the light of day in its definitive form with the well-known section on Islam, which now forms the basis for Catholic dialogue with Islam.

As Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, of Alexandria and Jerusalem, I am glad to recall that Louis Massignon's ideas flourished in the ambiance of the Melkite Church in Egypt, which had become a second home to our people coming from Syria, Lebanon and Palestine to work and develop the country.

Thank you for inviting me to greet you at this celebration of Massignon's life and work at Heythrop College in the University of London. We hope we may organise jointly with you in this Massignon jubilee year a similar conference at our Liqaa Center in Lebanon.

Massignon can be our guide towards better understanding with Muslims and all our neighbours in this Arab Spring time of revolutions in the Middle East and of growth of Muslim presence in Europe.

Perhaps we may learn to be not merely in dialogue but in love with each other, as the Evangelist John reminds us, "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son." (John 3: 16)

Gregorios III