



**A RETROSPECTIVE:
ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF ANTIOCHIAN
ORTHODOXY IN NORTH AMERICA**

by Antony Gabriel

Decisive historic changes do not come from great wars, terrible cataclysms or ingenious inventions. It is enough that the heart of man incline its sensitive crown to one side or the other of the horizon, toward optimism or pessimism, toward heroism or utility, toward combat or peace. (Ortega Y Gasset)

The history of the Antiochian Orthodox Church in North America is rich and exciting, full of larger-than-life personalities and a struggle for power and influence not unlike that in the political arena. It begins with the faithful who crossed the ocean and planted the seeds of Antiochian Orthodoxy upon this continent. Their noble and at times ignoble deeds flesh out the real story.

This article is not intended to be a definitive or exhaustive work on the history of the Antiochian Orthodox Church but is rather an attempt, on the occasion of its centennial celebration, to recapture elements from the exciting and complex history of the Church in North America.

I. THE EARLY PERIOD

Historical and Political Background

The story unfolds with the election in 1899 of the Arab Patriarch Meletios II (Doumani) as head of the Church of Antioch. Meletios assumed the patriarchal office after a bitter struggle in the Syrian Orient during which the Arabs of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of

Antioch, as it was so incorporated in the empire, sought to wrest control of the throne from the Hellenes.

During several centuries of Ottoman rule, the patriarchs of the ancient See of Antioch were Greek ethnics, originally from Constantinople and later selected from the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The Greek monastics, together with some Arabs, were overseers of the properties and holy places of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Hierarchs for the various sees or archdioceses in the empire were frequently drawn from this ecclesiastical pool.

The sultanate in Istanbul (the "Sublime Porte") maintained a watchful eye over the Christians in the Middle East through the Millet System (Nation).¹ Syria fell under Ottoman rule in 1516, and the patriarchate was transferred from the city of Antioch to Damascus following a series of political, economic, religious and environmental calamities in 1531.

The Sublime Porte later turned a blind eye to the increasing intervention by European powers within the empire, allegedly to protect the Christians. The Melchite schism in 1724 and the Protestant missionary incursion into Arab lands in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries² resulted in a rather uneven spiritual and educational church life that sapped the community's energy and gave impetus to the appointment of Greek monastics to the Antiochian Throne to counteract the western missionaries. The ecumenical patriarch was viewed as "the king," the civil and religious head of the Greek Orthodox people who were also subjects of the Ottoman Empire.

Of all the patriarchates, Antioch suffered the most throughout its long history. This suffering often was at the hands of outsiders who, under the pretext of religion, and for reasons which were political and economic, almost succeeded in destroying the venerable Church of Antioch. It was therefore not surprising that the calls for men of their own to govern the Church of Antioch grew louder. Metropolitan Antony Bashir wrote in *The Word* (Jan. 1957) of the persecuted Church of Antioch: "The Middle East has been a battleground of ideas and armies since the dawn of time.... The troubled history of

the Church founded by the Apostles indicates the constant miracle implied by its survival.”

In the waning years of the Ottoman Empire, nascent Arab nationalism began to blossom throughout Syria. The Arabs who had been constantly subjected to arbitrary rule began calling for the liberation of their patriarchate from alien domination.³ The cause of restoring the Patriarchate of Antioch to the Arabs was furthered by the presence of the Russian Consulate and the Russian Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society.

Arab Orthodox Christian Immigration to North America

Waves of Arab Orthodox Christians immigrated to North America (and elsewhere) at the turn of the twentieth century, searching for religious freedom, political liberation and a better way of life. The Christians of Syria — like their forefathers before them — had always been adventurous, seeking new venues for their restlessness. Some left to escape oppression while others left to satisfy their longing to conquer new worlds.

Before World War I, the tide of immigration from Greater Syria (here including modern Lebanon) took place against the backdrop of the geo-political struggles of the times. While North American shores were considered to be a beacon of hope and a new frontier for the peoples of the Levant, their journey to North America was fraught with uncertainty and terrible hardships. There were many cultural and linguistic barriers to overcome as well as poverty, isolation and inexperience once they arrived. Many immigrants thought that after achieving success they would return home, and some eventually did. Most, however, remained in North America and carved out for themselves and for future generations a bright and exemplary life. They contributed hugely to the economic, cultural and literary mosaic on this continent.⁴

The most important contribution to North America made by these pilgrims was, in a word, *Orthodoxy*. They were sustained in crisis and adversity by the simplicity of their faith experienced in life and liturgy. Their world was shaped by the Christian humanism of the

Syrian East, giving these pioneers in North America a holistic vision almost unmatched by any other ethnic group arriving on her shores.

Russian-Arab Cooperation

A history of the Antiochian Patriarchate must also take into account the important role the Russian Church played among the Christians of the Middle East, especially in the nineteenth century. The Church of Russia saw herself as the protector of the Orthodox Arabs through the Russian Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society (1882-1917). This was crucial to the development of the Antiochian Patriarchate and to establishing new religious and educational institutions in Palestine and Syria, and many hierarchs were encouraged to seek advanced theological degrees in Russia. Affinity with Russian spirituality, education and culture was a strong factor in shaping the spirit of the Syrians who came to these shores. Indeed, some credit the final restoration of the Arabs to the Patriarchate of Antioch to the direct and indirect intervention of the Russians in Syria.

Orthodoxy in America began with the Russian mission to Kodiak, Alaska in 1794. When Alaska was sold to the United States in 1867, the see was transferred to Sitka and then to San Francisco. A new chapter opened when Archbishop Tikhon (Bellavin)⁵ made New York City the headquarters of the emerging Orthodox Church in North America in 1905.

It was thus virtually inevitable that the Church in the New World would come under the canonical protection of the Russian Church. At the same time, the strong national sentiments among the Syrians in North America led them to organize themselves along ethnic lines.

Raphael Hawaweeny and Syrian Orthodoxy

The Syrian Orthodox Benevolent Society of New York was organized through the efforts of George Bek Qodsy and Dr. Ibrahim Arbeely, its first president. Dr. Arbeely contacted the then Archimandrite Raphael Hawaweeny, professor of Arabic and Islam at the Academy of Kazan in Russia, and petitioned the Holy Synod of Russia, asking that Hawaweeny be sent to serve the spiritual needs

of the Orthodox of the city and of all the United States.⁶ There had already been two unsuccessful attempts to establish a church for the New York community. Father Constantine Tarazi and Archimandrite Christopher Jabara, who had arrived in 1892, were unable to maintain a viable community structure, lacking full support at home and abroad.

Hawaweeny's arrival inaugurated the first official Antiochian presence and the formation of the Syrian Orthodox Ecclesiastical Mission in North America in 1895. He was appointed head of the Syrian Mission under the Russian Orthodox Archdiocese. By the time he was elected and consecrated bishop of Brooklyn in 1904 as vicar to Archbishop Tikhon, he had already established his missionary, administrative and literary credentials.

Raphael Hawaweeny was born in Beirut on or about November 8, 1860. A "Syro-Arab by birth, a Greek by education and an American by residence, but a Russian at heart and a Slav in soul," as he himself proudly said. He was shaped by both his priestly family connections and the religious and national movements of his time. He spent his formative years in Syria where he was exposed to the leading Greek and Arab hierarchs. He was educated in his own country and later at the theological school of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (1879-86) at Halki and finally in Russia at Kiev (1888-89).

Hawaweeny was a charismatic leader with an authoritative manner and a compassionate and humble heart. When he arrived in America to begin his real mission in life, the establishment of Antiochian Orthodoxy in the New World, he absorbed and integrated all the diverse linguistic, cultural and spiritual elements that had nourished his intellect and soul.

His travels, publications and evangelical pastorship mark him as one of the most outstanding hierarchs of the Antiochian Church of the twentieth century. He travelled the length and breadth of the country, often under difficult conditions, to visit the faithful in scattered communities. The magazine *al-Kalimat* (1905), now *The Word*, is one of his most enduring literary bequests to this archdiocese, as are his many liturgical books. He was receptive to the use of English

in the Liturgy, and translated a number of liturgical texts; many are still in use. He was even open to discussion with other religious groups, notably the Episcopalians.⁷ His ecumenical relations in general, linked to his Episcopalian connections in particular, are especially noteworthy.

Hawaweeny was a member of the Russian Church and keenly aware of the canonical norm for the ecclesiastical authority in a new mission and land. He was a staunch nationalist and patriot, but championed the cause of the Antiochian Patriarchate. In his life and ministry one can see the Russian line from the nineteenth century in Syria to the beginnings of the Church in the New World.

Raphael Hawaweeny died on February 27, 1915. He succeeded in laying a solid foundation for the Church in North America through its ministry to the Syrians. As the first Orthodox bishop of any nationality to be consecrated on North American soil, Raphael Hawaweeny planted and nurtured the Antiochian presence in this hemisphere.

He was a man of extraordinary gifts. His disciplined mind and creative spirit inaugurated a process in North America that carries the Antiochian Archdiocese securely into the twenty-first century.

The First Priests

The first generation of priests and their families endured great hardship, and the celibate priests knew great loneliness as well. They left a culture far different from the one they encountered in the New World. Some of the newcomers were educated while others were the children or grandchildren of priests or chanters. Some entered the business world and were later ordained to serve their communities; others were elected by their congregations because they were literate or knew the liturgical worship or had fine singing voices. Most loved the Church and sacrificed heartily for her survival in the New World.

Many priests were simple folk, imbued with the Orthodox spirit, who had migrated to these shores without much knowledge of the intricacies of Orthodox theology. The celebration of the Liturgy was what knitted the community together.

The clergy who came to this country at the turn of the century hoped for freedom and a better life. They were, however, often at the mercy of contentious boards and insufficient revenues, and they suffered from the political controversies which divided parishes and often devastated their homes or families. For many of them, their hopes were only achieved by their children. Even as they labored under grave limitations, they created the foundation of a strong archdiocese.

The Americanization of Orthodoxy

In spite of the vicissitudes suffered by the early faithful, there was a unity of purpose and a structure: the Russian Orthodox Archdiocese and its Syrian Mission. The first seedlings of the Americanization of Orthodoxy arose with the reception of convert clergy as well as those of Middle Eastern ancestry who initiated English into the periodicals and the Divine Services.

Loyalty to the Russian hierarchy was not an issue; the relationship within the American synod was an easy one. Russians, Greeks, Arabs and Serbs were mutually administered by the hierarchs present in North America at that time. The authority and primacy of the Russians and their bishops, as well as that of the vision of Archbishop Tikhon, were locally acknowledged. In 1907, the archbishop was transferred to Russia and later elected patriarch just as an American Church was beginning to take root.

Russy-Antacky Cooperation and Division; the Agony Begins

The seeds of dissent and chaos for the Syrian Mission were sown with the arrival of Metropolitan Germanos (Shehadi) of Seleucia in 1914 shortly before the death of Bishop Raphael Hawaweeny. He came to America on a fundraising mission on behalf of his archdiocese, with accreditation for a limited stay as a guest of Bishop Raphael. Before long, however, his presence and the message he carried to the Syrian nationals brought tension.

With World War I (1914) and the October Bolshevik Revolution in Russia (1917), communications with the Russian and the

Antiochian Church became difficult. Funding from the Russian Holy Synod was abruptly cut off. In the United States and Canada political strife developed within the Russian communities, stifling efforts by the Russian Orthodox to preserve Orthodox unity in the New World. The dislocation of authority and fragmentation of the Russian Church as well as the resurgence of desire on the part of national Orthodox Churches to reattach themselves to the Mother Churches also created uncertainty.

The Succession: Aftimios Ofiesh

After Bishop Raphael died in 1915, a period of instability ensued in which no clear successor emerged. Negotiations as to who among his closest confidants would succeed him began — during his funeral services! Documents of the period reveal that Germanos saw himself as the successor to Raphael. In a letter to Archbishop Evdokim, dated June 1/14, 1915, he raised questions about Hawaweeny's citizenship and consecration.⁸ In another letter (April 24, 1917), he claimed he was the acting bishop of the Syrian Antiochian Orthodox Church of North America.⁹

Archdeacon Emmanuel Abo Hatab, who had come to America in 1900 to assist Bishop Raphael, now stepped aside. Aftimios Ofiesh of Montreal emerged as leader of the "Russy" faction. With the support of the Russian Diocese of New York, he was named bishop of Brooklyn. Before his consecration, Germanos attempted to persuade him to submit to Antioch with the assurance the patriarch would authorize his consecration by Antiochian hierarchs. He was consecrated on May 13, 1917 by Russian Archbishop Evdokim (Merchevsky).

Aftimios had the support of thirty-four of the forty-one clergy who cast their ballots in the election and the loyal parish supporters of the canonical Russian hierarchical overseers. But some fifty telegrams were sent to Archbishop Evdokim accusing Aftimios of being an active member of the Masonic order, an accusation he vehemently denied.¹⁰ Many editorials attacking him were published in the media of this period as well.

In 1908, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, for reasons of its own, placed the Greek parishes in America under the jurisdiction of the autocephalous Church of Greece. However, the arrival in 1918 of Archbishop Meletios (Metaxakes), of Athens, accompanied by Alexander, bishop of Rodostolou would create a change. When Meletios was elected patriarch of Constantinople in 1922, he placed his compatriots in North America under his jurisdiction. This was in spite of his observation, based on his experience in America, that he had seen the largest and best part of the Orthodox Church in the diaspora. And that he understood how exalted the name of Orthodoxy could be, especially in the United States of America, *if more than two million Orthodox people here were united into one church organization, an American Orthodox Church.*

Meanwhile, the Russian Church in America was in turmoil. In 1921, Patriarch Gregory IV of Antioch corresponded with the Russian Holy Synod in Moscow — and later with the exiled Russian bishops who formed a synod at Karlovsky, Yugoslavia — to regularize the Church of Antioch's relationship with the Church in the New World. The answers he received were unsatisfactory. One stated the situation was not impossible within canonical norms. The other suggested dividing Arab Orthodox Christians into two dioceses, one under Russian authority and the other under Antiochian control. It was even suggested that Bishop Aftimios and Metropolitan Germanos resign and that Archdeacon Thomas Mallouf be elevated in their stead.

Neither the recently restored patriarchate in Moscow nor the newly established Synod of Exile Bishops had the will or the know-how to deal effectively with the deteriorating situation in the New World. Patriarch Tikhon, however, showed sensitivity to Bishop Aftimios' position and wanted a harmonious transition. Also, it is probable that the first Orthodox council to meet in North America, on November 16, 1923, had a pressing issue to deal with: a pending schism in the Russian Church. A resolution was passed to reaffirm the unity of the Russian Orthodox Church in America under Metropolitan Platon.¹¹

Metropolitan Germanos, meanwhile, had free rein to pursue his own interests and start churches where he could. He identified him-

self with those Syrians who rejected any authority but their own, and he unleashed the aspirations of the Antiochenes for the "legitimate" return to their Mother Church. The rise of nationalism paralleled his immense personal appeal¹² and ignited Russy/Antacky antagonism.

In 1923, Metropolitan Germanos was recalled to Antioch by Patriarch Gregory IV. Archbishop Evdokim and Alexander, archbishop of the Greek Diocese, issued decrees against his remaining in North America in a series of letters. Charges and counter-charges between clergy and laity exacerbated the situation. Churches, communities and families were split along party lines.¹³

At a meeting in Detroit on April 4, 1924, the Russians declared themselves independent of Moscow, and proclaimed an independent self-governing Metropolia until conditions in Russia would allow the resumption of normal relations. This action could not be officially sanctioned by Patriarch Tikhon. But it appears his tacit agreement was transmitted through intermediaries, appointing Metropolitan Platon head of the Russian Archdiocese during these turbulent times.

These divisive problems cast a long shadow on the episcopacy of Aftimios Ofiesh, who early-on had revealed brilliance, coupled with enormous energy, integrity and strong individualism. Although he was a visionary leader and far-sighted thinker, he spent much of his life in conflict. In Syria he had organized the Young Syrians, but his efforts were censured by Patriarch Meletios II (Doumani). In the New World, he was pastor of the fractious Montreal community, a microcosm of the Russy/Antacky controversy, which ultimately divided. During his episcopate he and his assistants, Archimandrite Emmanuel Abo Hatab and the Reverend Basil Kherbawy, spent much time travelling from city to city and law court to law court trying to prevent Germanos and his followers from gaining control of the communities in the diocese.

The Election of the Archbishop of New York and All North America: Victor Abou-Assaley

Patriarch Gregory IV sent Metropolitan Gerasimos (Messara) of Beirut to attend the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in Portland, Oregon, at the invitation of the Reverend W. C. Emhart, envoy of the American Episcopalian Church. He was accompanied by his secretary, Deacon Antony Bashir, and Archimandrite Victor Abou-Assaley.

Both the Russian Church in America and the Patriarchate of Antioch were seeking financial assistance from the Episcopal Church since the Church in Russia could no longer sustain its financial commitments abroad. The Episcopalians agreed to make a grant to the Patriarchate of Antioch and to finance the missionary work of Deacon Antony Bashir who was subsequently ordained a priest by Metropolitan Gerasimos.

Today it is believed that Metropolitan Gerasimos had another agenda. Before returning to the Middle East, he had sent a letter dated June 8, 1923 to a leading Arab newspaper, announcing the decision of the Patriarchate of Antioch to assume jurisdiction over the Orthodox of Syria and Lebanon in the New World. The letter also invited the faithful to nominate three candidates for the episcopate of the new Antiochian jurisdiction, and was echoed in an encyclical and an official call for nominations (June 1923):

... I have been favoured by his beatitude with the joyful tidings announcing his esteemed determination to include the parish of North America as related to the Orthodox Syrian, within the number of parishes, constituting the holy apostolic See of Antioch, and his fatherly readiness to ordain a regular shepherd who will work for their unity and take full care of their religious and moral needs....Accordingly I call upon the children of the Syrian Orthodox Church scattered all over North America to make the nomination in accordance with aforesaid canonical rules....¹⁴

The stage was finally set for the first recognized hierarch affiliated with the Antiochian Patriarchate to be selected and consecrated as "Archbishop of New York and All North America." On November 8, 1924, in Worcester, Massachusetts, Victor Abou-Assaley was consecrated by Metropolitan Zachariah (Ragy), delegated by Gregory IV. Archbishop Panteleimon of Neopolis of the Jerusalem Patriarchate was delegated to be his co-consecrator. Archimandrite Ananias Kassab was appointed vicar-general and remained in this post until Victor's death.

Both Archbishop Aftimios and, ironically, Metropolitan Germanos protested at the alleged interference of Gregory IV ¹⁵ in the internal affairs of the North American Church. The Holy Synod of Antioch itself was divided. Dissenting were Metropolitans Alexander (Tahan), Arsenios (Haddad), Basilios (Dibs) of Akkar, and Boulos (Abou-Adal) of Beirut.

It was an amazing time. Everyone took sides and was prepared to fight to the bitter end. During this period, a brief attempt was made in the United States and Canada to negotiate a settlement of the division between the three hierarchs serving in North America: Aftimios of Brooklyn, Germanos of Brooklyn, and Victor of New York.

It was in this context that Archbishop Aftimios sought and received permission from Russian Metropolitan Platon and the Russian Synod to simultaneously remain a member of the American synod and primate of an independent church and elevated to rank of archbishop. He felt an indigenous church was needed to serve those born and raised in North America. He ordained qualified American converts to produce a program of religious educational materials and music to serve the needs of the young people. The work of Archpriest Michael Gelsinger is a testimony to his vision.

The diocese meeting held in 1925 culminated in the formation of a new ecclesiastical phenomenon. After many attempts to negotiate unity with the other Syrian bishops had failed, Archbishop Aftimios's plan for a united Orthodox Church was finally blessed by his superior, Russian Metropolitan Platon, in February, 1927. The Russian Synod approved the establishment of the autocephalous American

Orthodox Church which would incorporate the faithful of the Syro-Arab Mission as well as the Orthodox born in the New World into one jurisdiction. Archbishop Aftimios was named primate; Archimandrite Emmanuel was consecrated as bishop of Montreal and administrative assistant on September 11, 1927, and Archimandrite Sophronios Bishara, as bishop of Los Angeles in 1928. This venture, however, was short-lived.

Archbishop Aftimios later claimed jurisdiction over all the Orthodox in North America, a posture that was rejected by Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and even parishes that had remained loyal to him during the Russy/Antacky dispute.

In a revealing exchange of letters on the subject of jurisdiction and unity between Archbishop Aftimios and Archbishop Alexander of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, Alexander asserted in a communique dated February 11, 1929 that all Orthodox elements should be united under the Ecumenical Patriarchate. His reasoning was based on the traditional interpretation of the canons (with regard to the diaspora) and on the argument that since Alaska had been sold to America in 1867, Russia no longer had claim over the Church in America.¹⁶

Archbishop Aftimios finally lost the support of Metropolitan Platon and the Metropolia when he questioned Platon's authority¹⁷ (and that of the other Russian bishops) after becoming engaged in a local controversy. As well, the Metropolia needed the material assistance of the Episcopal Church which viewed the new independent church under Aftimios as a threat to its interests. After his study, *The Orthodox Situation in America*, a practical and lucid survey and program of unity, was published, Aftimios offered to resign so the newly-appointed Greek Orthodox Archbishop (later Patriarch) Athenagoras would assume the leadership, an honor Athenagoras declined, preferring to remain loyal to his superiors in Istanbul.¹⁸ He also lost his position in the Syrian community as bishop of Brooklyn.¹⁹ Emmanuel (Abo Hatab) was appointed in his place.²⁰

It has been suggested that in despair, after everything collapsed around him, Aftimios took the step which ultimately ended his

episcopacy: his marriage to Mariam Namey in 1933. He resigned and was deposed. He died in seclusion in 1966.

Metropolitan Germanos returned to Beirut in 1933 and died a year later. Bishop Sophronios, who remained *de facto* independent after the demise of the autocephalous church, died in 1934. Archbishop Victor, the canonical hierarch, died on April 19, 1934. Bishop Emmanuel Abo Hatab, who was recalled by Platon, continued to serve the few parishes remaining under the 'Russy' Mission. Towards the end of his life he worked in co-operation with his long-time friend Patriarch Alexander III to secure the canonical release from the Russy Mission for the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese under Archbishop Victor (Abou-Assaley). The release was granted after Emmanuel's death on May 29, 1933.²¹

With the departure from the scene of all the major controversial players in the Antiochian drama, it was hoped that peace would reign. However, there were several other mitigating factors, among them the Arab mentality or "memory," the ability to recall to the minute detail an event long past. Second, the Holy Synod now fully restored to the Arabs, continued over the years a uniquely Turkish diplomatic stance: it appeared to take all sides, issuing a decision and then reversing policy in mid-stream. This was frustrating to North American Orthodox Arabs who had become accustomed to debate and decision-making. Third, there was conflict between the village mentality and a more global mind set. Finally, there were past community bipartisan controversies having the church as their focus.

II. THE MIDDLE PERIOD

Antony Bashir and Samuel David: A Time of Hope

A new chapter in this troubling era opened when His Beatitude Alexander III, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, delegated Metropolitan Theodosios (Abourjaily) of Tyre and Sidon in 1935 to visit North America to conduct the nomination process for a successor to the late Archbishop Victor (Abou-Assaley) and to unite the Antiochian Archdiocese in North America.

Metropolitan Theodosios, accompanied by Archimandrite Antony Bashir, pastor of St. George of Detroit (1932-1935) and patriarchal vicar (1934) travelled throughout North America. Three candidates for the vacancy emerged after the views of the faithful, their leaders and notables across North America had been polled: Antony Bashir, Samuel David (Toledo), and Ananias Kassab (Ottawa).

The Unity Proposal

A unity agreement amongst the candidates was drawn up in the interest of the archdiocese. It stated that there should be "one head of the Church;" that nominations should come from the people; and that the candidate obtaining the majority of the votes would "guide the ship."

The agreement promised that all candidates would support the chosen nominee. The archdiocese would be defined in two zones, with two bishops to assist in administering it. The agreement was signed by all parties and cabled to His Beatitude on October 15, 1935, from Brooklyn, New York.

This proposal was fraught with difficulties, however, and had repercussions for years on the policies of the church. The election of auxiliaries was not a common practice in the patriarchate; the right of succession abrogates the nomination and election of a new primate according to canonical order.

The Election of Antony Bashir

Final voting took place on November 10, 1935, in Detroit, Michigan, with the patriarchal delegate presiding and the pastor and parish leaders participating in the process to which all parties agreed. The list of candidates finally included Antony Bashir, Samuel David and Agapius Golam, with Ananias Kassab withdrawing his candidacy. When Antony Bashir was declared the winner, there was a brief period of quiet. The possibility of uniting all the factions had been short-lived, and evaporated as soon as the nominating process was completed. Meetings and discussions continued, but the seeds of dissension were once again sown within the Antiochian family.

To further exacerbate the controversy, the supporters of Samuel David intercepted a telegram sent by Metropolitan Theodosios to Patriarch Alexander III, allegedly abrogating an agreement between Theodosios and Samuel David.²² Metropolitan Theodosios, apparently trying to appease all parties, had assured Samuel David that he would be elevated in due course to assist Antony Bashir in the administration of his vast archdiocese. However, this was a commitment which he should not have given without first consulting with the Holy Synod of Antioch. Samuel David was urged to be patient until the canonical process leading to a successor to Archbishop Victor was accomplished and he was assured of his elevation by all parties. Realistically, it was necessary that Metropolitan Theodosios return to the Middle East to report on the election and discuss ratification of the unique agreement. The intercepted telegram, however, was seen as a betrayal by David's followers, and they insisted on his immediate consecration.

Archimandrite Antony's nomination was confirmed on November 19, 1935, in the United States, and in Damascus, on February 5, 1936. His consecration as Archbishop of New York and All North America took place on April 19, 1936, at St. Nicholas Cathedral in Brooklyn, New York (two years to the day after Victor's death) by Metropolitan Theodosios, assisted by Bishop Vitaly of the Russian Orthodox Church. Patriarch Alexander III, following the agreement drafted earlier, issued a statement on April 6, 1937, confirming "the Most Reverend Archbishop Antony Bashir, Syrian Orthodox Antiochian Archbishop, is the only representative of the Patriarchate of the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch and all the Orient in the United States of America...."

Samuel David, Archbishop of Toledo

Archimandrite Samuel David was consecrated on April 19, 1936 in Toledo, Ohio, by Archbishop Adam of Philadelphia, Bishop Arseny of Detroit, and Bishop Leonty of Chicago (later metropolitan of the Metropolia).²³ Samuel David was immediately suspended by the patriarch of Antioch, and remained so until he was restored in 1939.²⁴

He originally claimed that his consecration was consistent with the norms of the Syrian Mission which was under the canonical jurisdiction of the Metropolia, and that he no longer belonged to the Antiochian Patriarchate.

Thus there emerged two archdioceses on this continent. Toledo was established as Samuel David's headquarters, with parishes in parts of the Mid- and Far West as well as Charleston (West Virginia), Ottawa, Cambridge (Massachusetts), Mexico City, and St. Nicholas of Montreal, plus several areas without churches. The vast majority of the parishes, however, remained under the authority of the Archdiocese of New York and All North America.

In response to the situation, Metropolitan Antony said:

We have depended a great deal on the old country. We still feel that the mother church in the old world can help us but we must realize that what we cannot do through unity ... we cannot expect any one else to do for us. His Eminence and I have ... agreed never to disagree. We both realize that we will not have many years left for us and those years ... must be used for the glory of our church, for the benefit of our faith, for the future of our youth because if we do not do that, we are going to be the losers.... I assure you that ... maybe even 90% of our differences ... were imposed on us by the selfishness of individuals who wanted to use the clergy for their own spiteful purposes. It is time we realized these things.²⁵

The Evolution of the Church and the Role of the Laity

The heightened role of the laity brought new complexities to a hierarchical church in a democratic society. In the Middle East, where the hierarch is the quasi-ecclesiastical/civil leader, he has considerable power while the laity have a much less important role. The first and second generation of Antiochian Orthodox Christians in North America wanted control over the parishes and in some cases actually

gained it. They were then able to influence the decisions of bishops as well. Many were uneducated in the faith and their new positions gave them power and a certain prestige within the community. North American Orthodox Arabs had not yet reached the level of sophistication to enter local or national politics; the church, therefore, was their preferred arena. This created enormous tensions in the North American Church, unknown to the parish councils and clergy of today.

The laity in North America also turned their attention to less controversial concerns. Children of Orthodoxy who were nourished by their faith likewise passed on their love of the Orthodox Church to their children. The Orthodox Church became a haven of security and the center that nurtured family values, morality and Christian education for their growth.

The Canonical Situation in North America: Unity and Disunity

The political influences of the day at home and in the Middle East, and the power exerted by some who had a vested interest in the perpetuation of disunity in the archdiocese on this continent caused the patriarchate to pursue an uneven course in dealing with the canonical situation in North America. Confusion reigned, and energy and resources that could have been utilized for the growth of Orthodoxy were dissipated.

In 1953, a proposal for succession, the Detroit Agreement, was put forward. It was not accepted in its entirety by the Holy Synod of Antioch since it might alter the canonical process of nomination and election. What was interesting in the proposal was the agreement that *no successor* would be elected to succeed Samuel David upon his death:

Immediately upon the decease of Archbishop Samuel David, or in the event of his succession to the office of Metropolitan Archbishop, the existence of the present Archdiocese of Toledo and dependencies shall automatically be terminated, and no successor to Archbishop Samuel shall be elected.²⁶

Actions taken at this convention, and succeeding ones in 1954, 1955, and later, confirmed the tradition of the canonical rights of the laity in the nomination process. Metropolitan Antony demanded and received support for a strong constitution as well as by-laws that would enshrine the legitimate legal rights of the North American clergy and laity. This was prophetic in view of the patriarchate's later reaffirmation of the tradition in Syria and Lebanon whereby the Holy Synod assumed the entire process of nomination and election.

In 1954, during Patriarch Alexander III's golden jubilee celebration, and in later years, Metropolitan Antony pursued a vigorous policy of attempting to regularize the canonical situation in North America. His position, consistently held, was that there had been no canonical election for the bishop of Toledo and no canonical delineation of boundaries other than that of the original Praxis of 1924 for North America.

After a visit to Syria in September 1955, Archbishop Samuel had been granted the title of "Metropolitan" along with a vote in the Holy Synod of Antioch by Patriarch Alexander III on October, 29 1953.²⁷ No archdiocese in the Antiochian Church had ever possessed two votes nor had a Mixed General Council created a new diocese in North America. The patriarch reasoned that this exception was in honor of Archbishop Samuel's long service to the Church.

When the official publication of the New Constitution and Canons of the patriarchate were ratified on November 19-20, 1955, Antony Bashir believed that the North American situation was finally resolved. Patriarch Alexander III had removed the reference to Toledo and listed only one archdiocese in North America.²⁸

Preservation of a united archdiocese, protection of the institution of the archdiocese from outside intervention, and development of a process for full participation in the selection of a successor to the metropolitan when such a need would arise were matters of great concern. Metropolitan Antony had tremendous influence on these deliberations, and history has since validated his efforts to spare future generations a struggle over division of the archdiocese, both at home and abroad.

During the archdiocesan convention in Los Angeles in 1958, Metropolitan Antony learned that Archbishop Samuel (David) fell asleep in the Lord on August 12 in Toledo, Ohio, while sitting in a chair with the Bible in his hand. After the business of the convention was concluded, Metropolitan Antony with a delegation of clergy travelled to Toledo, Ohio, and visited the home of Oscar Joseph to express the sympathies of the archdiocese.

Samuel David, from Aitha al-Fakar ²⁹ (August 26, 1893) was a sincere and gentle person who remained through his life a villager at heart. His real strength was his love of the Church, the Divine Liturgy and his magnificent voice. In later years, he recorded the most famous and best loved liturgical hymns which were sold throughout North America. Samuel David utilized the literary skills of Ananias Kassab and the solidity of the members of the David family as well as other powerful laymen. His generosity abides in the lives of today's churchmen whom he sponsored with his family resources to these shores. Memorial testimonies to his gifts can be seen at the Convent of Saidnaya as well as in the patriarchal Grand Salon in Damascus.

The Administration of the Archdiocese under Metropolitan Antony

Antony was a commanding figure in the Orthodox Church, a born leader with an expansive world view. Born in the village of Douma, Lebanon (March 15, 1898), he displayed strong individualism that served him both in adversity and good times. His keen wit and sense of humour helped him bear the burdens of high office and deal effectively with constant conflicts among the people after his election. He was also a writer and intellectual, an extraordinarily articulate man, in contact with the leading thinkers and writers of his day.³⁰ Metropolitan Antony's presence was a major factor in knitting together his flock and subsequently elevating their vision beyond narrow parochial interests. While he had the heart of a villager, and understood people as they were, at the same time, he towered above many of his contemporaries with his breadth of vision and intellectual depth.

Heroic efforts were made to elevate the organizational standards of the archdiocese. The task of bringing the ancient Church of Antioch in the New World in line with the mainstream churches in North America weighed heavily on the minds of Metropolitan Antony and his co-workers. Their commitment to the future displayed far-reaching vision.

One of the earliest accomplishments was the establishment of the general convention, comprised of clergy/lay delegates with its uniquely North American concerns³¹ and the nominations process. This institution, an innovation of the Antiochian Church drawn from the political arena, later became popular in other jurisdictions. The concept of the board of trustees, with fiscal accountability, modelled on structures in Protestant churches, was instituted throughout the archdiocese and was the forerunner of the parish councils of today (now in line with Orthodox ecclesiology).

Antony as a visionary was active in the formation of the Federation of the Primary Jurisdictions in 1942 (transformed into the Standing Conference of Orthodox Bishops in America in 1960).

The archdiocese also had to adjust to the growing demands of its adherents, especially the youth. Metropolitan Antony was active in launching the Syrian Orthodox Youth Organization (SOYO), and he inaugurated Sunday School and Sacred Music programs and innumerable publications, among them *The Word* (revived), *The SOYO Digest* and many religious educational materials.

Church and Politics in the Middle East

On June 17, 1958, Patriarch Alexander III died. In the context of the great achievements of his patriarchate, his action vis-à-vis North America were puzzling. He was a skillful churchman and a consummate politician, but managed to obfuscate the centrality of a principle of canon law by his actions.

The election of a successor to Alexander III was no easy task because of the tradition of conflict in the Middle East and the emerging political forces that left their mark on the Eastern Church. The hiatus between June 1958, when the patriarch died, and the nomination/

election of a successor in November 1958 resulted from the political disturbances in Lebanon at that time which made it impossible for the metropolitans of Lebanon to travel to Syria. President Eisenhower, in fact, was obliged to send in U.S. Marines to quell the storm in September 1958, during the final days of Camille Chamoun's mandate.³²

In his enthronement speech, the new Patriarch Theodosios VI spoke of his conviction that Orthodoxy was an integral part of the Arab world. It should be noted that at the time of his election to the patriarchal office, he was metropolitan of Tripoli, therefore a bishop from Lebanon and, significantly, on good terms with the then Premier Rachid Karami. Politics, as always, played a central part in the church's survival in the region. The Middle East is an important sphere of influence in which the various foreign powers (particularly Russia and the United States) and their agents and the Eastern Church were engaged in an uneasy struggle. Theodosios' pro-western leanings were part of the reason for Metropolitan Antony's support³³ and, subsequently, his elevation. Metropolitan Antony's prestige and shrewd presence helped defuse the difficult situation.³⁴

The co-mingling of church/state relations was a part of the fabric of the Byzantine Empire and later during the period of Ottoman rule and Czarist Russia. Easterners draw a subtle distinction between the two. Theologians have argued about the separation of the twin eagles of power: the emperor and the patriarch, but in fact, both realities had an impact on one another.

North American Unity

During the November 17, 1958 meeting of the Mixed General Council of the Antiochian Patriarchate for the nomination of the new patriarch, it was decided to upgrade the North American delegation from three to five members as was done for Damascus and Beirut. Metropolitan Antony included some members from Toledo in a gesture of good will.

After his election by the Holy Synod, Theodosios VI presided over a meeting of the council. It was affirmed, again, that there was one undivided archdiocese in North America. The council approved

a plan to establish a bishopric with geographic boundaries under the jurisdiction of the presiding metropolitan, whose name would be commemorated in all services.

Once again, Metropolitan Antony believed the thorny unity problem in North America was finally resolved. However, letters continued to be exchanged between Theodosios VI and Metropolitan Antony regarding the future of the archdiocese in North America.

Antony called for a "Special General Convention" of the archdiocese on January 12 and 13, 1960 in Toledo, to set geographical boundaries for a new episcopate of Toledo, as ordered by the patriarch and the council, and to nominate by secret ballot three qualified clergymen for the episcopacy from within the archdiocese. Forty-eight thousand parishioners were present in person or by proxy. (The seven Toledo parishes representing twenty-two hundred parishioners were not in attendance.) One hundred and thirty-seven delegates, clergy and laity, were represented.

Metropolitan Antony submitted the list of ten qualified candidates, the names of the three receiving the majority of votes to be submitted to the Holy Synod of Antioch. Four removed their names: Archimandrites Ellis Khouri, George Ghannem, Gabriel Samné and the Reverend Philip Saliba. Remaining as candidates were Archimandrites Ilyas Kurban, Ananias Kassab, Gregory Abboud, Basil Kazan, Athanasius Saliba and Michael Shaheen.

The three clergymen who had received the most votes were officially accepted as candidates with a resolution from the assembly asking that His Beatitude and the Holy Synod elect one, and only one, official candidate. Antony accepted, despite his uneasiness, the creation of an episcopate in Toledo, thinking of the Greek model in North America: one archdiocese with geographical bishoprics. He hoped this would lay the foundation for unity on this continent.

The Election of Archbishop Michael Shaheen

When Metropolitan Antony returned to Damascus for a meeting of the Holy Synod of Antioch, December 8, 1961, the unity of the North American archdiocese was affirmed once again. However, on

Saturday, December 9, the Holy Synod convened and unexpectedly elected Archimandrite Michael Shaheen of Montreal. He was to be consecrated in North America.

Archimandrite Ilyas Kurban was later elected metropolitan of Tripoli, a move that was very popular in Tripoli. Archimandrite Basil Samaha was elected metropolitan of the almost non-existent Archdiocese of Hauran, and Archimandrite Ignatius Hazim of Beirut was elected patriarchal-vicar of Damascus (Palmyras) in February, 1962. Participants asserted that these moves were intended to resolve the crisis between the pro-western and eastern bloc partisans within the patriarchate.³⁵

Ignatius Hazim was consecrated patriarchal-vicar to Theodosios VI, and Michael Shaheen as assistant to Metropolitan Antony. It was intended that the new bishop's role would be to assist Metropolitan Antony and minister to the archdiocese; he was not bishop of a geographical zone, nor bishop of one group in the archdiocese. Metropolitan Antony returned to Damascus with Archimandrite Michael Shaheen for his consecration on February 11, 1962, at the Church of the Holy Cross.

At the meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America held in Montreal, May 18 and 19, 1962, a request by Toledo to omit Metropolitan Antony's name from the liturgical services was granted by Metropolitan Antony as a concession. Bishop Michael pledged to uphold the unity of the archdiocese, and Toledo insisted it would maintain its own treasury. The minutes reflected relief among all the participants with these solutions.

Antony next received an invitation to attend a synod meeting on May 22, 1962. With little time to prepare, he sent his regrets. On July 6, 1962, he learned that a meeting of the Holy Synod of Antioch had been held on May 24, at which the subject of the North American archdiocese had been reopened: Toledo was granted the status of a diocese within a diocese.

Bishop Michael left North America at this time, and later reappeared with a new praxis from the patriarch dated July 22, 1962

naming him metropolitan of Toledo. This appeared paradoxical since after Samuel David's death, no *Locum Tenens* had been appointed; there was no nomination from the "archdiocese" of Toledo since it did not exist;³⁶ and there was no canonical appointment for him to assume this title. Had it not been for the interventions of certain members of the synod, it would never have occurred.

At the archdiocesan convention in Asbury Park, New Jersey, August 24, 1962, the clergy led by Protosyngelos Ellis Khouri along with trustees, lay delegates and youth leaders unanimously pledged their loyalty to Metropolitan Antony and issued a protest against the decision that jeopardized the relationship between New York and Antioch.

With his last trip to the patriarchate in May of 1964, Metropolitan Antony made another attempt at reconciliation, only to have his efforts thwarted. His final journey was to Rome where he was received by Pope Paul VI; to Istanbul, to reunite with Patriarch Athenagoras, his long-time friend, and to Jerusalem, to visit Patriarch Benedict.

Metropolitan Antony's Place in History

Metropolitan Antony was a central figure in American Orthodoxy. While he had his share of human weaknesses, in balance and contextually, his strengths far outweighed them. He was a gifted, literate and articulate spokesman for Orthodoxy in North America. He had the prophetic insight, grace and awareness to initiate impressive reforms, and yet he knew the limits of his power. He borrowed from ideas circulating at the time, from thinkers and from institutions, and integrated them to construct a viable archdiocese in the twentieth century through his writings and his ministry.

He was for years both archbishop and archdiocese. The archdiocese was built on his leadership as a fundraiser. He lived simply, allowing himself few luxuries. In the early years, he used to visit the homes of the archdiocese wherever he travelled and he used the *nourieh*, or gifts given, to maintain the archdiocese. This was later transformed into the assessment system and major financial contri-

butions of members of the archdiocese and the board of trustees. He also used the revenues accrued from his successful publishing business for the archdiocese.

Paradoxical as it may seem, while he continued to press at home for canonical reform he continued to provide material support for the Mother Church and its institutions. He had a sensitive heart for the Balamand, the patriarchate itself, for his village church and other facilities in Syria and Lebanon. He negotiated with the old country based on both the canons and the traditions that became a part of the fabric of North American church life.

Metropolitan Antony was immersed daily in the political and secular tribulations affecting the Orthodox Church he served. To fully appreciate his life, one must remember the times: the dislocations and the political tensions in the Middle East and Russia, and between the patriarchates of Constantinople and Moscow, as well as the pressures brought to bear on Patriarch Theodosios VI.

The End of an Era; the Death of Antony Bashir

Suddenly and unexpectedly, Metropolitan Antony, after a career that spanned nearly fifty years, died of lymphatic cancer on February 15, 1966. His death took the archdiocese, the patriarchate, and the Orthodox world by surprise. The letter he sent to the parishes of the archdiocese on February 8, 1966 informing all that he was being admitted to the hospital gave no indication of the seriousness of his illness. He was later joined by his family and, after receiving the sacraments, slipped into a deep coma and died peacefully.

Metropolitan Ilyas (Kurban) of Tripoli was appointed *Locum Tenens* by Patriarch Theodosios VI to take charge of the archdiocese and funeral arrangements. Thousands of religious and civic leaders, and people from all walks of life, came from across North America to pay tribute to the man whose ministry had affected so many. The then Reverend Philip Saliba was selected by Protosyngelos Ellis Khouri to deliver the official eulogy on behalf of the archdiocese.

Other eulogies and scores of messages were delivered in recognition of the great contributions of this visionary churchman

throughout his life. His most enduring legacy was an archdiocese with his imprint on every facet of its organized life. The late Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann, dean of St. Vladimir's Seminary, called him the real father of American Orthodoxy, and so he was.

III. A NEW ERA BEGINS

Philip Saliba

If the historical significance of Metropolitan Philip's election and consecration is to be fully comprehended, it is imperative to record the motivations and machinations of men who set the stage for one of the most dramatic episodes in the contemporary period.

The "Special General Assembly" called to consider the election of a successor to Metropolitan Antony was convened on March 16-17, 1966 in New York City. The meeting was presided over by the *Locum Tenens*, Metropolitan Ilyas. At the opening session on March 16, Monsour Laham, vice chairman, and John Khouri, chancellor of the board of trustees, outlined the rationale for the legal procedures to be followed. At the time of the balloting, a full 94.7% of the qualified clergy and lay delegates of the archdiocese were present in person or by proxy.

There were attempts at caucusing, even some outright campaigning, as rumors concerning the candidates circulated during those intense two days in New York. However, when the time arrived to take action, the gap between the Old and New World was bridged: the mechanism in the archdiocesan constitution worked, and the process of selecting a leader went ahead smoothly.

The final list of accredited candidates included Archimandrites Gibran Ramlaoui and Athanasius Saliba, and the Reverends Philip Saliba and Antoun Khouri. Protosyngelos Ellis Khouri and Metropolitan Ilyas declined to be nominated; Archimandrite Gregory Abboud's name was offered from the floor, and Bishop Ignatius Hazim, known to the archdiocese since 1963 when he attended the archdiocese convention in Washington, D.C., was presented.

When Philip Saliba approached the podium, he stirred the assembly as at Metropolitan Antony's funeral with a maturity far beyond his years. The archdiocesan assembly produced a slate of nominees with one prominent candidate, without rancor, quibbling or disturbance. When it came time to vote, the chairman of the Department of Credentials and his committee conducted the roll call, and balloting took place in an orderly fashion.

When Metropolitan Ilyas Kurban announced that a consensus had been reached, the assembly was overjoyed. Philip Saliba received almost twice the aggregate of other votes. The consensus was an eloquent testimony by the clergy and lay delegates to their confidence in Philip Saliba to lead the archdiocese.

It is now known that Philip Saliba was caught completely off guard by the massive mandate he was given. In all the deliberations he had deferred to others, not believing he would receive the majority of the votes. Overwhelmed yet inspired, he humbly accepted at the tender age of thirty-five the challenge before him.

It was little wonder that the mantle of leadership fell to Philip. His inner fortitude, intellectual capacity, leadership skills and spiritual development had been in evidence from the earliest days. Born in Abou-Mizan, Lebanon on June 10, 1931, he entered the Balamand Monastery at age fourteen. Later in the schools of the patriarchate in Syria, Kelham Theological School and the University of London in England, Holy Cross Theological Seminary in Brookline, Massachusetts, Wayne State University in Detroit and St. Vladimir's Seminary in New York, he continuously sought to satisfy his intellectual curiosity. As a young deacon, he held positions as secretary to Patriarch Alexander III, and dean of students and lecturer of Arabic language and literature at Balamand Seminary. After his ordination to the priesthood, he served as pastor of St. George, Cleveland, Ohio (1959-1966).

In retrospect, the meeting in New York in 1966 was a dazzling occurrence in the life of the archdiocese. The participants at this unusual conclave clearly believed they were free agents in the process for change and renewal; they set a pattern for generations to come. The archdiocese was sorely tested and, in the distinctively North

American but Orthodox fashion, responded appropriately. This provided a fitting epitaph to the legacy of Metropolitan Antony. But it was only one act in a protracted drama still to be played in the Middle East.

The Worsening Situation in the Middle East

Metropolitan Ilyas (Kurban) played a key role in this unfolding situation. In transmitting the results of the nomination convention to the patriarch and members of the Holy Synod of Antioch, he was unwavering in his support for the legality of the Special General Convention — unknown in the Middle East — and was able courageously to frustrate delaying tactics by the synod to send a delegation from Damascus to North America.

He communicated regularly with the archdiocese. On May 19, 1966, he issued a communique reporting on the meeting of the board of trustees held on May 7, 1966, and again on May 24, 1966, informing all that he was leaving to attend a meeting of the executive committee of the Mixed General Council and the Holy Synod of Antioch, accompanied by Monsour Laham and Rudy George, archdiocesan trustees, at the patriarchate in Damascus.

He also noted that the nominating committee for the vacant Archdiocese of Latakia had selected three candidates: Bishop Ignatius Hazim, the Reverend George Khodre and Archimandrite Constantine Papastephanou.

On May 31, 1966, Monsour Laham reported that at the final meeting on May 21, between the North American delegation and the patriarch and members from the Mixed General Council of the Antiochian Patriarchate, the nominations of March 17, 1966 had been accepted. A promise was made to convene the Holy Synod of Antioch before the end of June, and Metropolitan Ilyas was requested to remain in North America until the synod meeting. There seemed to be hope for a speedy resolution.

Rump Synod: Election of Metropolitan of Latakia

However, when Metropolitan Ilyas returned to the United States on June 21, 1966, he brought news of an uncanonical meeting of several metropolitans on May 25, at which Antonio Chedraoui had been elected and consecrated as metropolitan of Latakia. The Arab and North American press was full of news at this time of the government of Syria, the Antiochian Patriarchate and the people of Latakia locked in a bitter struggle. These revelations only increased the anxiety of the North American archdiocese. Members feared a repetition of the same tactics. In fact, the rump synod did elect Ignatius for North America; to which he replied, "Thank you for your election to China."³⁷

On July 9, a special meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Antiochian Archdiocese in North America was called. All the deans were present. It was decided that a delegation headed by Protosyngelos Ellis Khouri, including several members of the clergy³⁸ should represent the archdiocese at the patriarchate, both preceding and during the next meeting of the Holy Synod. During the 1960 archdiocese convention in Houston, Archimandrite Ellis Khouri had been elevated to the rank of Protosyngelos in recognition of his unique role in the history of the archdiocese. The ninth generation of priests in his family, Father Ellis was the ultimate example of humility and service combined with a brilliant and poetic mind. His stature was unmatched in the entire history of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese in North America.

Holy Synod Preparations

In Beirut, where there was intense interest in the upcoming synod and election of the North American prelate, the Protosyngelos Ellis Khouri headed off all attempts to undermine the delegation's mission. Dayton Mak, first secretary to the American ambassador, met with the American delegation at the American embassy. He stated there had been no problem of such complexity in the history of his diplomatic career and in the history of the American relationship with

Lebanon. The results of the upcoming synod would determine the destiny of the Patriarchate of Antioch for centuries to come.³⁹

The North American delegation was subjected to scurrilous attacks in the press. With the support of the Latakia community leaders there, the role of Ellis Khouri widened, and he proved to be an able statesman for the resolution of the emerging crisis. As chief spokesman, he explained eloquently the position of the Archdiocese of North America: that a special convention had been held; a legal consensus had been taken; one candidate had received an overwhelming majority of the votes; and the clergy and laity stood firm with absolutely no compromise on any of the issues.

The delegation, he noted, had travelled thousands of miles to appeal to the patriarch and the Holy Synod of Antioch to expedite the nomination and immediately elect Philip Saliba as successor to the late Antony Bashir. The message was conveyed to His Beatitude Theodosios VI and Metropolitans Elia (Beirut), Elias (Mt. Lebanon), Elias (Aleppo), Paul (Tyre and Sidon, Marjayoun), Ignatius (Hama), Ignatius (Sao Paulo), Meletios (Argentina), Ilyas (Tripoli), and Ignatius Hazim, dean of Balamand Seminary.

In a highly unusual step, Orthodox parliamentarians, with Orthodox senators, deputies, ministers from both the Syrian and Lebanese parliaments and members of the patriarchal Mixed General Council concerned over the beleaguered patriarchate, met with Theodosios VI. They confirmed "that the faithful in Syria and Lebanon urge this synod to act decisively, with legality, without compromise, since the decisions of this synod meeting would have far-reaching consequences in the history of the patriarchate."

Protosyngelos Ellis Khouri met with His Beatitude at the patriarchal headquarters in Damascus. The patriarch spoke with his friend in English in deference to the American clergy. Perhaps sensing he was at the apex of his ecclesiastical career, he called for the synod meeting to convene at the Monastery of the Prophet Elias (Dhor El Shweir), to assert his authority to convene the synod anywhere within the boundaries of the patriarchate, and most importantly to diffuse the climate of crisis.

As the synod was preparing to assemble on July 25, 1966, five dissenting bishops issued a mocking statement published in Lebanon in the *Lisan al-Hal*. Patriarch Theodosios VI, with the support of the clergy and laity of the patriarchate and the archdioceses involved, did not budge from his decision to hold the meeting at the monastery.

In the end, the five opposing bishops did attend the synod meeting but only to disrupt the procedures. They ultimately walked out.

When the patriarch reconvened the meeting, Metropolitans Salibi, Karam, Hureiki, Forzley, Moawad, Swaity and Kurban were present, making a quorum. They accepted the nominations, and the following day elected Philip Saliba as Metropolitan of New York and All North America, and Ignatius Hazim as Metropolitan of Latakia. This election ended a painful chapter in the Church's history, and the victory for North America became a victory for the patriarchate.

The Consecration of Metropolitan Philip

Philip Saliba was consecrated on Sunday, August 14, 1966, at St. Elias Monastery where he began his ministry, before a wildly enthusiastic congregation of thousands. The event was widely covered by the media throughout the Arab world. He then lay the cornerstone for the new St. John of Damascus Academy at the Balamand Seminary, fulfilling the long-standing commitment by the late Metropolitan Antony Bashir.

Metropolitan Philip was enthroned at St. Nicholas Cathedral, Brooklyn, New York, on October 13, 1966 in the presence of a multitude of Orthodox hierarchs, clergy and laity of the archdiocese and a large contingent of ecumenical representatives and diplomats. Archbishop Iakovos, primate of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America and chairman of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in America (SCOBA), delivered the main address to the new metropolitan.

The Early Ministry

Soon after presiding over the archdiocesan convention in San Francisco, Metropolitan Philip returned to the Middle East for the

continuation of the meetings of the Holy Synod of Antioch which had elected him on August 5 and was still in session. There his election became a symbol of the future as well as an essential precursor in the recovery of the dignity and prestige of the patriarchate.⁴⁰

During the archpastoral charge to the 1969 General Assembly of the 24th Annual Convention of the Antiochian Archdiocese in Miami, Florida, merely three years after assuming office, Metropolitan Philip implemented decisions that would have far reaching consequences in the future of Antiochian Orthodoxy in North America. He began tackling the reforms of the constitution and by-laws of the archdiocese, the clergy-laity relations and the ethnic self-designation of the archdiocese. The highlights included here, signify a drastic change with bold and inclusive initiatives that would eventually define the course of the archdiocese:

1. To drop the word "Syrian" from the official title of the archdiocese;
2. To support the early formation of an autocephalous Orthodox Church in America;
3. To overhaul and revise the archdiocesan constitution, following two years of work by a special commission;
4. To admit elected representatives of teen-agers to full voting status in archdiocesan conventions;
5. To authorize a comprehensive survey to determine the future possibilities of the Syrian Orthodox Youth Organizations SOYO, the archdiocesan youth society;
6. To erect a new archdiocesan headquarters.

The Death of Patriarch Theodosius VI and Election of Patriarch Elias IV

The octogenarian Patriarch Theodosios VI died on September 19, 1970 in the hospital in Beirut while members of the Holy Synod were in session at the Monastery of the Prophet Elias in Dhor El Shweir. In an ironical twist, the patriarch ushered in a new era as the

non-political metropolitans he consecrated in his twilight years opened a fresh chapter in the Antiochian Church.

Following the funeral rites, the Holy Synod of Antioch was convened on September 25, 1970. Metropolitan Elias of Aleppo was elected patriarch. Metropolitan Philip later observed, "Never in the history of Antioch was the Holy Spirit so manifest in the election of a Patriarch." The Holy Synod, foreseeing the political situation unfolding in the Middle East, acted decisively with the election of Elias IV, called, "the sturdy man of Antioch" and "Patriarch of the Arabs."

The Unity Agreement: New York and Toledo

A unity agreement was finally reached between the Archdiocese of New York and the Archdiocese of Toledo, through the efforts of Metropolitans Philip and Michael to end the divisions in the North American Church. It was signed on June 24, 1975 and ratified on August 19 at the patriarchal Monastery of the Prophet Elias, by the Holy Synod of Antioch. This agreement united the Archdiocese of New York and All North America with the Archdiocese of Toledo and Dependencies into one archdiocese, called the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. Metropolitan Philip Saliba was named primate and Archbishop Michael Shaheen his auxiliary.

Thus ended a most divisive period of church history. The long march the two men had begun in 1973 to end the sad chapter of division in North America was over. The discussions were at times difficult and tortuous, but in the end Metropolitan Philip and Archbishop Michael rose to their task and brought their negotiations to a timely conclusion. The unification would have an enduring impact in North America and serve as an example for the See of Antioch. It was a propitious moment, with peace in the patriarchate and North America, to extend an invitation for a first patriarchal visit.

Antiochian Holy Year, 1977: The Visit of Patriarch Elias IV

In 1977, the Antiochian Holy Year was proclaimed by Metropolitan Philip throughout the archdiocese. The presence of Patriarch Elias IV brought the Antiochian experience to North American Christians. Elias repeated throughout his archdiocesan tour, "Antioch is you! You are Antioch!" The patriarchal visit was timely since it came during a period of great theological and moral uncertainty throughout the world, and reaffirmed the spiritual heritage of the Antiochian Orthodox Church. To commemorate the event, the Patriarch Elias IV Endowment Fund was established in support of the Balamand Theological School of St. John of Damascus, considered vital to the interests of the patriarchate.

On June 21, 1979, Metropolitan Philip received the shocking news that Patriarch Elias IV had died suddenly after a massive heart attack. The North American delegation accompanying Metropolitan Philip arrived in Damascus on June 28, two days after the funeral. Of paramount importance to Philip was the expeditious election of the successor to Elias IV. According to the patriarchal constitution, the Holy Synod of Antioch must elect a successor within ten days after the patriarchal seat becomes vacant. During the interim, Philip himself was pressed to be a candidate. He refused stating that there was much left undone in North America and that he could best serve the patriarchate by his episcopacy in North America.

Metropolitan Ilyas (Kurban), as the *Locum Tenens*, convened the Holy Synod for the nominations and election. The candidates were Metropolitans Ignatius Hazim, George Khodre and Elias Youssef. After the nominations were closed, the Holy Synod proceeded to the Cathedral of the Virgin Mary for the election. Ignatius was named the one hundred and sixty-fifth successor to the Apostles Peter and Paul. Metropolitan Philip stated, "We Antiochians have had many great patriarchs... and again we probably have one of the best patriarchs in the entire Orthodox world; a learned man, freely elected to serve the Church." This was of great importance to a church which included state-dominated churches in Istanbul, Russia, Rumania and Yugoslavia.

Patriarch Ignatius is seen as a bridge between two worlds: traditional Orthodoxy and the twentieth century. He is Syrian, has lived mostly in Lebanon and has held several posts there, including dean of the Balamand Seminary. He received his advanced theological degree from St. Sergius Orthodox Institute in Paris, has travelled widely, and is well known in ecumenical circles around the world.

Constitutional Issues

After the thirty-fifth archdiocesan convention, held in Los Angeles in 1981, there occurred a deadlock on nominations for the election of an auxiliary to assist Metropolitan Philip in meeting the expanding needs of the enlarging archdiocese. A confrontation loomed between the archdiocese and the patriarch who was resisting inclusion of this item on the agenda of the Holy Synod. What was at issue was not simply the right of the laity to nominate candidates for the episcopacy or the matter of an auxiliary bishop; there was also deep concern regarding the inter-Orthodox dialogues and their implications for the future.

Metropolitan Philip began a discussion with the Holy Synod regarding the disparities between the 1955 and 1972 patriarchal constitutions and that of the archdiocese. He indicated that in 1966, the Archdiocese of North America had followed the canonical tradition of the 1936 nomination, election and official praxis issued in 1924, and the constitution drawn up under the primacy of Alexander III. The later accretions of 1972 by Elias IV were added to protect the patriarchate from the factionalism that had afflicted the Church.

Metropolitan Philip assured the Holy Synod that the Archdiocese of North America had no intention of going its own way, and that the laity would never relinquish their sacred responsibility in the nominations process. He further added that the archdiocese would not be subjected to division to satisfy some intricate casuistry for auxiliaries. Finally a proposal was hammered out under the joint sponsorship of Metropolitans Philip and George Khodre to nominate three members of its clergy: Archimandrites Antoun Khouri and George

M. Corry, and the Reverend Basil Essey, and to study the election of an auxiliary bishop for North America.

Election of Antoun Khouri

Antoun Khouri was subsequently elected auxiliary to Metropolitan Philip at the meeting of the Holy Synod held on November 4, 1982 and was consecrated titular bishop of Seleucia⁴¹ on January 9, 1983 at St. Nicholas Cathedral in Brooklyn. His consecrators were Metropolitan Philip, Archbishop Michael, Metropolitan Elias (Saliba), Metropolitan Paul (Bendely) (representing the patriarch), and Bishop Antonio (Chedraoui) of Mexico.

The newly consecrated Antoun Khouri had travelled a long journey from Damascus. After serving under the metropolitan of San Paulo, Brazil, he entered St. Vladimir's Seminary, then served several parishes of the archdiocese until he assumed the post of administrative assistant to the metropolitan. He later became dean of St. Nicholas Cathedral in Brooklyn and served until his elevation to the episcopacy.

Antiochian Holy Year 1985: The Patriarchal Visit of Ignatius IV

An invitation was extended to Patriarch Ignatius IV, who has dedicated much of his administration to building and renewing the patriarchate and constructing new facilities such as the St. John of Damascus Theological Academy at the Balamand (underwritten and supported by the Archdiocese of North America and a trust bequeathed by Elias IV) and the new Balamand University, to visit North America on May 16, 1985. He was invited to preside, together with Metropolitan Philip and the auxiliaries and archbishops who accompanied him, in the dedication of the Heritage and Learning Center at the Antiochian Village on July 14, 1985.

During his trip, he met with and approved the ongoing dialogue with the "Evangelical Orthodox Church" (EOC) which was searching for an authoritative spiritual home. This proved to be a bold move as the other autocephalous churches either were unable or unwilling to

engage in a meaningful dialogue with them. The evangelicals were received by chrismation in various churches across North America, and the clergy were ordained into the Antiochian Church by Metropolitan Philip, and commissioned to missionize North America.

Traversing the continent during the four-month sojourn convinced the patriarch of the need for another auxiliary to assist the primate in administering the affairs of the archdiocese.

The Holy Synod and the Election of Basil Essey

The agenda of the meeting of the Holy Synod of Antioch convened at the Balamand Theological Academy/Abbey on November 12-14, 1991 included the following issues: the on-going dialogue with the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch; the benefits of comparative study of administration and canon law between Antioch and North America; the canonical guidelines for church discipline and the formation of a spiritual court of the patriarchate. It also addressed the issue of *economia* (oikonomia) and reaffirmed that each metropolitan must dispense *economia* in his own archdiocese, using his own wise counsel in each situation.

Also at this final session, a new auxiliary for North America was elected. The names of six candidates were submitted from which three were nominated. Archimandrite Basil Essey was elected without any procedural wrangling or politicking. The transition within Antioch, and the acceptance of North American practices, had come to fruition. The Church had come of age.

The American-born priest Basil Essey was consecrated in his parish, St. George Cathedral of Wichita, Kansas, on Sunday, May 31, 1992 by Metropolitans Philip and Elias (Audi) of Beirut and the auxiliaries of the archdiocese. Father Basil had endeared himself to many over the years in his various roles under the direction of the primate, especially those relating to the youth of the archdiocese. His nomination and election symbolized the maturation process on both continents. An American-born cleric, educated in seminaries in the United States and at Balamand in Lebanon, he assumed the episcopacy in the last decade of the twentieth century.

Recent Events

On October 24, 1992, Archbishop Michael died of a massive heart attack in Toledo, Ohio. Funeral services on October 29 were attended by all the hierarchs, scores of clergy and the faithful from the archdiocese. Metropolitan Philip eulogized him as the bishop who confirmed unity in 1975, ending the disunity in North America.

At a special meeting of the enlarged Holy Synod on October 4-12, 1993, at the Balamand Monastery and Theological School in Lebanon, Metropolitan Philip submitted a study of Bishop Raphael Hawaweeny's life for consideration for his canonization.

On January 24, 1995, the Holy Synod of Antioch elected Archimandrite Demetri Khoury and assigned the Right Reverend Bishop Joseph Zehlaoui, auxiliary to His Beatitude, to serve as auxiliary bishops for the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. This action came in response to the request of the board of trustees of the archdiocese. Archimandrite Demetri was consecrated titular bishop of Jāblat on March 12, 1995 in Damascus, Syria.

Mission in North America

Since 1966, when Metropolitan Philip assumed the primacy of the archdiocese, the Department/Commission of Parish Development (Missions) has been a priority in his ministry. The archdiocese has gone through a period of unprecedented growth, tripling in size through both internal and external forces. Emphasis has been placed on reaching out to the unchurched and the creation of new missions in viable areas. In addition, the "uncivil" war in Lebanon has brought thousands of refugees from Lebanon, especially to the Canadian parishes. This immigration has strengthened the Orthodox Church from within.

The reception of Western rite parishes has brought renewed vigour and increased membership. What was a seminal current in the 1950s is today a full-fledged movement. Entire disaffected Anglican and Episcopalian parishes have united with the ecclesiastical authority of Antioch, in large measure because of discontent with the ordination of women, liturgical tinkering and dogmatic relativism in the

Anglican Church. These Western rite churches follow their own liturgy with some modifications to bring it in line with the Orthodox Divine Liturgy. The movement was originally blessed by Patriarch Alexander III in 1958 just prior to his death, and implemented in North America by Metropolitan Antony with the ordination of Alexander Turner, a pioneer in this movement, and the reception of his followers. The current primate, sensitive to the attachment of North American Christians to their own liturgical traditions, has encouraged this process which is taking place in many parts of North America and even in England.

The growth in the Antiochian Church is also attributable to the entry into canonical Orthodoxy of the Evangelical Orthodox Church, now the Antiochian Evangelical Orthodox Mission (A.E.O.M.), whose origins stem from various Protestant denominations, bringing with them a fresh zest and missionary spirit. These new church members follow the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom in English. The integration of these diverse elements within the archdiocese is a tribute to the openness implicit in the Antiochian tradition and the expansive view of Metropolitan Philip.

Philip Saliba's Ministry

Metropolitan Philip's awareness of the world at large has allowed him to rise above ethnic particularism to search for ways to relieve hunger, racism, totalitarianism, economic exploitation and social injustice. Under his leadership, many episcopal missions have brought humanitarian relief to the people of the Near East — the orphans, the needy, Palestinian, Lebanese, and Syrian refugees. Scholarships have been made available for students; and the governments of Syria, Lebanon and Jordan and many institutions and archdioceses have received financial support for the reconstruction efforts in their war-torn countries.

In his own archdiocese, Metropolitan Philip has looked beyond parochialism and certain fundamentalist tendencies for the larger good of the archdiocese. In the course he has charted, he has attempted to bring church structures into line with the Orthodox theological pre-

mises necessary for a balance between the hierarchy, the parish clergy and the archdiocesan board of trustees and local parish councils. He has maintained a constant and vigilant watch over the transformation of the many institutions of the archdiocese into an organic unity of purpose and vision as the Orthodox Church turns towards a new century.

The organizational level has been elevated by the many innovations Metropolitan Philip has initiated: The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch, the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women of North America, the Clergy and Parish Council Symposia, Teen SOYO, the Fellowship of St. John the Divine (SOYO), the Antiochian Village and the Heritage and Learning Center, the archdiocesan headquarters and West Coast Chancery, and the Task Force for the Twenty-first Century.

As a "practical theologian," he has tried to move from juridical issues to those of faith in action in his pastoral work. His thesis for his master's degree dealt with the Eucharist in the early church, and this has been a consistent theme throughout his ministry, articulating the Church as a worshipping community. He is known at home and abroad as a charismatic, creative leader, embodying the spirit of Antioch in the breadth of his encounter with the world and its endless need for redemption and transfiguration.

Another hallmark of the ministry of Metropolitan Philip has been his relentless search for ways the Orthodox hierarchs of the Americas can coordinate efforts to meet the vital needs of today's Christians. As vice-chairman of SCOBA he never ceases to urge his co-workers to rise above narrow jurisdictional lines to confront the larger issues. There is an awareness that he has encouraged and nurtured organic Orthodox unity among all the canonical jurisdictions as a realizable goal, as well as addressing the everyday issues that affect the Church daily by implementing a common witness/action.

Orthodox Unity

Metropolitan Philip hosted SCOBA in an unprecedented meeting at the Antiochian Village, Ligonier, Pennsylvania on November 30

– December 2, 1994. Twenty-nine bishops representing the entire spectrum of Orthodox churches and ethnic groups were in attendance. This historic first assembly was presided over by Archbishop Iakovos (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese), chairman of SCOBA, and the agenda covered important topics for the future of the Orthodox Church on this continent: the ongoing struggle for administrative unity; the various programs under the auspices of SCOBA such as International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC), the Orthodox Theological Society in America (OTSA), the Orthodox Christian Education Commission (OCEC), etc.; and an important statement on mission and evangelism. This gathering affirmed that the Orthodox Church is no longer a foreign implant but at home in the North American cultural setting; ready to engage in coming to terms with the realities of modern life as the twenty-first century looms ahead.⁴²

Conclusion

The Antiochian Patriarchate is immeasurably richer for Metropolitan Philip's ministry; not merely because of the vast amounts expended for its varied causes but because he has singlehandedly raised the consciousness of Antiochian ideals throughout this archdiocese. Antioch is no longer simply an ancient reference or a spot in history but a dynamic evangelical challenge for every generation. It is a living "school" that renews and incarnates the apostolic message of hope on this continent as well as in the Middle East.

*We may know the human only where we are
confronted with the divine;*

*We may know the temporal only when we
ponder the eternal;*

*And we may know the depth of the Valley
only when we look at it from the peak of
the Mountain.*⁴³

NOTES

Some references from the author's extensive bibliography have been incorporated into the Selected Bibliography at the end of this volume.

Author's note: This article is drawn from a forthcoming book. The references listed here are only a part of the extensive bibliography the book will include. The author has arranged to have many of the letters and periodical articles cited translated from the Arabic press. The author used the archives of the Moscow Patriarchate, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America, the Orthodox Church in America, as well as the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of North America. The author has also relied on personal conversations, interviews, tapes of speeches and his own diaries.

¹ The Millet system of the Ottoman Empire kept religion ideologically compacted and under the control of the Sublime Porte. Christians and the Jews had, for example, their own Millet/Nation within the Ottoman Empire. They did not form part of the community of state and had no share in its military or religious organization.

² The missions stemmed from the growth of British, French, Italian and American commercial interests as well as the time when the French intervened after the 1860 massacres. On the Protestant sides since the mid-nineteenth century, there arrived in the Middle East missionaries from the Church of England, the Presbyterian Protestant Society, the Scottish United Free Church and American Board for Foreign Mission; in addition to the Danish, Swedish, Irish and German contingents. The Latins, after the formation of the Propagation of the Faith, in 1622, sent Capuchins, Jesuits, Carmelites and Franciscans, to the Middle East. The Christians were easier prey than "those stubborn Mohamedans" in the words of one Protestant missionary. Their interventions posed a direct threat to the indigenous Christians.

³ Professor Derek Hopwood notes that Meletios II's election as the first Syrian since 1724 was a real victory for Arab nationalism.

⁴ Bishop Emmanuel Abo Hatab wrote in *A Brief History of the Syrian Community of Greater New York*, that "New York City ... [had] become the Capital of the Syrian Immigration. It [was] the most important center for the churches, organizations, publishing houses, and business establishments. In New York, you [could] experience their love of tradition and witness their progress and high moral standing."

⁵ Archbishop Tikhon was glorified on October 19, 1989 in Moscow.

⁶ The petition, dated August 8, 1895, and freely translated, stated the faithful had for some time felt they needed a priest to care for their spiritual needs:

The Orthodox community has been less fortunate than other communities and has for a long time prayed to God to grant them what he granted to Catholics and Maronites. Those denominations have indeed found in their superiors and chiefs leaders who have done everything to make them progress spiritually and morally: building churches for them and providing them with priests. Our community was lifeless and scared to ask for help from the Antiochian See fearing no response from them, no help at all....

Our society ... [has] agreed to ask as pastor the Rev. Father Archimandrite Raphael Hawaweeny ... because they found in him a fully religious man, very pious, who loves what is good for the community and especially the attachment to the Russian Holy Synod....

It is with pleasure and pity for our souls that the Archimandrite accepted our wishes... We have... hope in the Holy Synod ...who has the charge to take care of Orthodox[y] everywhere ... that he will support our demand....

⁷ The article by Metropolitan Antony. "Pastoral Direction and Instruction on Orthodox and Protestant Episcopal Relations and Ministrations in America," July 31, 1944 describes Bishop Rafael's attempts to foster Orthodox aspirations for Christian unity, and includes a pastoral letter written by Hawaweeny in which he outlines the Orthodox Church's position regarding inter-faith practices.

⁸ The letter purported to raise these questions on behalf of Patriarch Gregory.

⁹ Metropolitan wrote to Archbishop Evdokim:

Existing conditions in the Syrian Church and the demands of many churches have forced me to accept the position of acting Bishop of Syrian Antiochian Orthodox Church in North America.

Therefore I ask you in the name of Christ to delay consecration of Archimandrite Ofiesh until we can communicate with our Patriarch in Syria.

For the sake of the peace of the Church, I repeat my request to your Grace to put a stop to all these acts which are creating dissension among my fellow countrymen.

¹⁰ Ofiesh read from a statement on August 3, 1914, the day he was made an archimandrite (from the original in the archives of the Diocese of Brooklyn, in Bishop Raphael's handwriting):

"I, Efim Ofiesh, the poorest of monk-priests, swear before this Holy Gospel, the honorable cross, the holy icon of our Lord Jesus Christ and His most Holy mother, the Virgin Mary and also before you, Bishop Rafael, and all the faithful who are here present, that first I renounce [illegible] and shall avoid participation in any Society or Sect the learning of which is contrary to the teachings, the beliefs and the rites of the orthodox holy and apostolic Church of Christ. Second, in my speech in my [illegible] and in my conduct I shall avoid everything that could cause doubt and temptation. Third I shall consecrate all the days of my earthly life with all my intellectual and corporal strength to the sincere and true service to my Orthodox Church and to my spiritual flock and I shall always obey without any hypocrisy or pretence the local legal spiritual authority."

¹¹ At the meeting, at which were attending Metropolitan Platon; Aftimios, the vicar-archbishop of Brooklyn; Stephan, vicar-bishop of Pittsburgh; Theophilus, vicar-bishop of Chicago; Archimandrite Benjamin, administrator of Canadian Churches and representatives of Eastern Orthodox Churches; Archbishop Alexander and Archbishop Panteleimon, one of the resolutions passed was "...to recognize that the only lawful head of the Russian Orthodox Church in America is Metropolitan Platon."

¹² Germanos was a man of enormous stature and presence and great personal magnetism. He had a powerful baritone voice, and was probably the first person to record the liturgy. His recordings of Arabic-Byzantine hymns were widely sold, and stirred the hearts and minds of his countrymen with nostalgia for the homeland. In fact, he was a pioneer in the use of the media.

¹³ The controversy was widely covered in the Arab press (*al-Hoda*, *Mir'āt al-Gharb*, *al-Sā'ih*, *al-Nasir*, and *al-Samir*). With the exception of Kahlil Gibran, all members of the al-Rabita al-Qalamiyya (the Pen Bond antedates its formal constitution in 1920) 'Abd al-Masih Haddad, Nasib 'Arida, Mikhail Naimy, William Catzefflis, Rashid Ayyub, Nadra Haddad, Wadi' Bahut, Ilyas 'Ata Allah (and later) Ilyya Abu-Madi were members of the Orthodox Church. Najib Badran's *al-Nasir* took an independent route in unconditional support of Germanos' aspirations.

¹⁴ Article 22 (Quoted from His Beatitude's letters of May 9 and 22, 1923, No. 688): "Whenever a vacancy takes place in a Bishopric office in one of the parishes, the Patriarch appoints whomever he deems fit to act as his representative and announces the fact to the local authorities to recognize said appointee as such. Thereafter the Patriarch shall announce to that parish through his representative to

nominate three qualified cleric for the office of Bishop within forty days of the announcement, and they shall present those names to his beatitude in an official petition. The Patriarch then shall communicate that to all the bishops of his See within a week." The complete voting procedure is then laid out, with a proviso that since Syria is so far away, the period for submitting nominations has been extended.

¹⁵ Patriarch Gregory IV, while pro-Russian, was first and foremost a pro-Arab nationalist. Though he was considered a crafty churchman by some English observers, he was revered by his co-religionists in the Islamic World and regarded as "The Patriarch of the Arabs" for his generosity during the famine in Syria during World War I. Many accounts of Gregory IV are quite sympathetic to him as a fine humble priest of God, one who, as the second Arab patriarch, brought a measure of stability to the Church during his lifetime. The city of Damascus was reported to have come to a halt during his funeral procession as the populace, Christian and Muslim alike, wept openly, lamenting the loss of their saintly Gregory, calling him the "Patriarch of all virtuous humanity."

¹⁶ Alexander replied to Aftimios in a letter dated Feb. 11, 1929 that "The jurisdiction over all Orthodox in the Diaspora, including the whole Western Hemisphere, which includes Alaska as well, being no more a Russian territory, belongs indisputably to the Oecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople," and suggested that to avoid making the situation worse, [Aftimios] should stop interfering in the affairs of the other national churches.

¹⁷ The objection to Platon raised by Aftimios, based on the canonical break between Moscow and North America, became the *raison d'être* for Antioch to finally justify canonical links with the Syrian Mission.

¹⁸ A letter, dated Dec. 1, 1928, from Patriarch Basilios of Constantinople, repudiated the establishment of this new apparently Russian Church and urged Athenagoras not to come into any communion with it.

¹⁹ The legal proceedings, Jan. 9, 1931, were between St. Nicholas Orthodox Church Committee of Brooklyn, Bishop Emmanuel Abo Hatab, and the laity against Aftimios Ofeish and the Syrian Holy Orthodox Greek Catholic Mission in North America.

²⁰ A letter from the Russian Orthodox Greek Church of America dated May 6, 1930 recognized Abo Hatab.

²¹ A letter from the Reverend Leonid J. Turkevich, dated March 10, 1933 to Bishop Emmanuel Abo Hatab, quotes part of a letter which Metropolitan Platon received from Patriarch Alexander:

...Since every Orthodox National Community which is in emigration including this part of the Syrian one, is naturally attracted by the general

and irresistible wave to its own Mother, this bishop (Emmanuel) and his flock themselves begin to dream and yearn... for more close reunion with their own Mother – Holy Church of Antioch... meanwhile saving in their hearts the feeling of unlimited gratitude towards Second Mother – the Holy Russian Church....

Upon receipt of this letter, His Grace Metropolitan Platon put the following resolution: “The wish of His Holyness [sic] Patriarch Alexander can be gratified after Bishop Emmanuel, his clergy and laity have pronounced their opinion upon the question brought up by the Patriarch.”

²² The telegram read:

PLEASE CANCEL LETTERS FEBRUARY EIGHTEEN. DETAILS BY MAIL.
[signed] THEODOSIOS

²³ When the consecrator-bishops were brought before the Council of Bishops in Pittsburgh, May 14-17, 1936, they stated that they had “performed the consecration to avoid the loss of the Syrians to other denominations such as the Maronites if their candidate had not been confirmed.”

²⁴ In 1939, the Holy Synod accepted his repentance and recognized his consecration with the understanding that he would assist and refer to Metropolitan Antony in all ecclesiastical matters.

²⁵ From an address to the fourth archdiocesan convention of September 21-25, 1949, in Worcester, Massachusetts.

²⁶ The Detroit Agreement was signed at the August, 1953, archdiocese convention at Detroit.

²⁷ A letter from Alexander III, Nov. 7, 1956, outlined the Holy Synod’s position regarding recognition of Archbishop Samuel’s long standing in the church, his “full-fledged membership in the Holy Synod”, and his title of “Metropolitan,” with “all the rights and privileges of each primate of the Holy Synod.”

²⁸ As reported in *The Word* (Sept. 1962). The Holy Synod meeting held on Nov. 18, 1955, at the insistence of Patriarch Alexander, removed the name of Toledo “because he feared that by including the name of Toledo... confusion would be caused.”

²⁹ One may speculate about whether Samuel David and his followers saw David in the same hierarchical lineage as Victor Abou-Assaley, since both men shared the same village patrimony.

³⁰ Antony Bashir was founder and publisher of the Arab monthly *al-Khalidat*, Detroit, 1926-27, and New York 1927-31. He was also a contributor to Arabic publications throughout the world. He wrote, translated and published (in English)

studies in the Greek Church, Catechism of the Greek Church. (In Arabic), Kahlil Gibran's *The Madman, The Forerunner, The Prophet, Sand and Foam, Jesus the Son of Man, The Earth's Gods*; Dr. Frank Crane's *Why I am a Christian?*; Wagner's *Simple Life*; Pappini's *Life of Christ and Prayers to Christ*; Tolstoy's *Confessions*; Brisbane's *Today and the Future Day*; Barton's *The Man Nobody Knows*, and many others.

³¹ The first general convention of the archdiocese was held in Cleveland in 1936. It was an early attempt by the newly-consecrated Metropolitan Antony to organize the American Orthodox Church. The second convention was held in Brooklyn in 1947 and was the first annual meeting. A band of younger laymen with Metropolitan Antony felt that the expanding diocese needed a structured central administration and new stability. Many exciting ideas came out of this convention: the constitution, the central archdiocese treasury and the Metropolitan Antony Foundation. Subsequent conventions have dealt with several recurring issues: the constitution, finance, unity, liturgy, education and the Balamand.

³² It was widely reported in the press that the agitation during the election arose from the so-called "Russian," pro-communist faction against the reported American imperialist 'plot' to take over the patriarchate. Metropolitan Antony was successful in his efforts to foil the alleged "left wing" attempts at international intervention in the internal life of the Antiochian Church. His prestige and shrewd presence helped defuse the situation. The North American delegation made no claims in Damascus to represent the government of the United States but only the best interests of the Patriarchate of Antioch.

³³ On the occasion of the election of Theodosios VI, Metropolitan Antony offered him a two-volume recording of the liturgy in four-part harmony, arranged by Professor Michael Hilko and the Reverend Michael Simon and directed by Christine Lynch, the first live audio recording of the liturgy in English.

³⁴ A feature in *Time* (Dec. 1, 1958) entitled "New Patriarch" covered this period.

³⁵ Samaha was considered suspect for his Russian connections, while Ilyas Kurban, western-educated, non-controversial and generally considered to be pro-western, could be elected to Tripoli where leftist connections would have been suspect.

³⁶ There is no evidence of the establishment of Toledo, *de jure*, since it had been deleted in the final draft at the 1955 Constitutional Conference which dealt with the establishment of new archdioceses. However, it was argued by a faction within the Holy Synod that since it existed *de facto*, the name of Toledo should be re-recorded in the patriarchal constitution, according to the summary of the Holy Synod's decision of 19 Nov., 1955, reported in the Archdiocesan Office of *The Word* (Sept. 1962).

³⁷ Metropolitan Ilyas continued to assure the patriarch and members of the Holy Synod that the North American archdiocese would not be side-tracked by efforts of a minority of bishops in the synod to undermine the legal procedures to elect its archbishop. He pointed out succinctly that the meeting which took place outside the patriarchate and without the patriarch in attendance lacked a quorum and had no official mandate from the people of Latakia. It was held in the Damascus home of Metropolitan Basil Samaha and the consecration took place in the Cathedral of Metropolitan Alexander Geha in Homs, Syria, not in Latakia.

³⁸ Thomas Ruffin, Theodore Ziton, Joseph Shaheen, George Rados, George S. Corey, Antony Gabriel and Mr. Michel Kafoure were part of the delegation, each paying his own way. George Ghannem and Zachariah Nasr later joined the delegation.

³⁹ For a more complete account, see Antony Gabriel's "Report from Lebanon, Diary of an Election 1966," *The Word* (Nov. 1966).

⁴⁰ Writing about that period later in *From Heart Attack to Heart Surgery*, Philip said, "The meetings lacked order, discipline, seriousness and a creative vision of the future to a degree that on one occasion I left the meeting utterly disappointed, and went to my room and wept bitterly."

⁴¹ Auxiliary bishops are given honorary titles to dioceses that are currently existent in name only.

⁴² For a more complete account see: "The Episcopal Assembly of the Orthodox Church in North America, Antiochian Village, Ligonier, Pennsylvania November 30 to December 2, 1994," *The Word* (January 1995).

⁴³ Philip Saliba (1970) Chicago.