



A CALL FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD
TO RETURN TO THEIR ROOTS
IN HISTORIC ORTHODOXY
ONCE . . .

...AGAIN

Also in this issue:

- The Road to Orthodox Unity
- St. Tikhon and the Orthodox Mission to America
- Growing up Baptist

SELF-RULE
and beyond . . .

Self-Rule and beyond. . .

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EDITORIAL: “Sharpening the Saw”

By Fr. R. Thomas Zell

Almost 15 years ago, the now famous time and personal management guru Stephen Covey first introduced his breakaway best seller, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. Well over ten million sales later, the book is still out there selling in practically every bookstore across North America, challenging people to rethink their priorities and to ask the tough questions concerning how they go about doing the things they are doing in life—whether they can do them better . . . or if they should be doing them at all!

One of the many intriguing chapters in *Seven Habits* is called “Sharpening the Saw.” I’ll admit to being particularly challenged by this chapter when I first read it, probably because it so clearly identified an area of weakness in my life. I should have known better than to let this one get away from me.

Covey begins his chapter with the following homey illustration:

Suppose you were to come upon someone in the woods working feverishly to saw down a tree.

“What are you doing?” you ask.

“Can’t you see?” comes the impatient reply. “I’m sawing down this tree.”

“You look exhausted!” you exclaim. “How long have you been at it?”

“Over five hours,” he returns, “and I’m beat! This is hard work.”

“Well, why don’t you take a break for a few minutes and sharpen that saw?” you inquire. “I’m sure it would go a lot faster.”

“I don’t have time to sharpen the saw,” the man says emphatically. “I’m too busy sawing!”

Funny, isn’t it, how really good authors find ways to express important concepts in the simplest of terms. Jesus was the Master of that art form!

Of course Covey is right! How easy it is to get so caught up in life doing the tasks we are *trying* to do—even good, praiseworthy, life changing tasks—that we for-

get to factor our own humanity into the equation. When our automobile starts sputtering every time we go uphill, we take it into the shop for a tune-up. When our microwave range takes more time to heat lunch than a conventional oven, we head out to Costco for a new one.

But all too often, we humans wearily plunge into our own responsibilities day after day, without sufficient introspection or personal reflection. Yes, we’re tired, ineffective, irritable, producing few results for many hours of labor. But we seldom ask “Why?” “What’s going wrong?” Of course we feel better by reminding ourselves that with all this important work to be done around us, we simply don’t have time to stop and ask those questions.

Stephen Covey would say—and he would be right—with so much to do around us, we don’t have time *not* to ask.

Even though Covey is not Orthodox, some of his concepts hit the target pretty close to dead center. Many Orthodox writers have been making this same basic point from a spiritual context for centuries. Saint Seraphim of Sarov, for example, taught this principle over one hundred years ago from a remote monastery deep in the Russian forest. His (now) famous dictum was, “Acquire inward peace, and thousands around you will find their salvation.” Jesus Himself asked, “How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye” (Matthew 7:3–5).

So admittedly, this issue of *AGAIN Magazine*, is, by design, introspective rather than evangelistic. It might even be a little “in-house.” We try not to do that very often—our calling is to go out to the highways and the hedges, compelling men and women to the great banquet of Christ’s Church. But once in awhile, it’s time to do a little “saw sharpening”—even in this wonderful Church to which we have been called by the grace of God.

Let me be frank. The disarray and disunity in American Orthodoxy is an imped-

ment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The progress being made in North America is slow—needlessly slow. And we ourselves, are at least partly, if not mostly, to blame for it. We might, perhaps, prefer to claim the spiritual high-ground by excusing our snail’s pace by blaming everyone else. Sure, the Catholics, the Protestants, the evangelicals, even the cults are huge by comparison, and in some cases growing by leaps and bounds. We, on the other hand, slog along in near anonymity in North America. Ah, but *we* are the True Church—that means we can be inefficient and inept in going about our work. At least *we* are doing God’s work ineptly.

Although there are many fine Orthodox organizations doing the work of the Gospel, they are, without exception, hindered and frustrated by the worldly barricades erected not from without, but from within the Church. How do we call men and women to the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, when we know full well that the One Church is composed of disparate, often warring entities—groups which at best find themselves working in isolation, re-inventing the wheel, and starting from scratch in their efforts, when much of this same work is already being done elsewhere? At the lowest point of this equation, Orthodox groups can be found deliberately working *against* each other—claiming territories they cannot possibly manage adequately, wasting precious time warding off fellow Orthodox groups from “invading their turf,” instead of working together toward a common goal. All too often, issues of language, culture, and control dictate the why’s and wherefore’s of Orthodox evangelism, and it is hurting our collective efforts. We are often, in every sense of the word, our own worst enemies.

So let’s take a few minutes to go “off-line.” It’s time for a little saw sharpening, and that is what this issue of *AGAIN* is designed to do. I know, it hurts. It’s never fun to ask ourselves tough questions. With so many important things needing to be done, we wonder, can we afford the time?

I know someone who would be glad to answer that question! ❖

SPECIAL EDITION OF AGAIN FOR THE WORD—We have excerpted 16 pages (out of the 32 pages included in the regular edition) from *AGAIN Magazine* vol. 25 No. 4 to be used as a special insert for *The Word*.

**AN EXCLUSIVE AGAIN INTERVIEW with Metropolitan PHILIP
of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America**



On October 9, 2003, the Synod of the Patriarchate of Antioch granted autonomy to its daughter Church, the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of North America. The following interview was conducted in November, 2003, shortly after Metropolitan PHILIP's return from Damascus.

Please see the sidebar on page 7 for the full text of the resolution granting autonomy or self-rule.

AGAIN: The decision of the Patriarch and the Holy Synod of Antioch to grant self-rule to the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America is deeply significant. It also has obvious and seemingly immediate implications regarding our relations with other Orthodox jurisdictions here in North America. What do you see on the horizon in this regard?

Metropolitan PHILIP: This decision regarding self-rule is very historic. It was not compelled by any political ideology, such as communism. After two years of intense negotiations, His Beatitude, Patriarch Ignatius IV, along with the members of the Holy Synod of Antioch, realized we do have a clear vision for the future of Orthodoxy on this continent. His Beatitude and the Synod became convinced that our self-rule is not a separation from Antioch.

In my address to the Synod, I said, “Antioch is far more than geography or nationality; it is a distinct school of incarnational theology, a theology rooted in Christ Himself, in Peter and Paul, in Ignatius of Antioch, in John of Damascus, and finally in the articulator of this theology, our father among the saints, John Chrysostom. Antioch is more than geography. Geography may change. Antioch is history and history does not change. Where are the Christians of North Africa? Where are the Christians of Yemen and Saudi Arabia? Where are the Christians of Constantinople, Jerusalem, and Alexandria?”

We hope and pray that our self-rule will embolden other Orthodox hierarchs, clergy, and faithful to emulate our example and move toward the future with courage and unshakable faith in God’s plan for Orthodoxy in North America. The unity of Orthodoxy in our country is inevitable because it is the will of God. This is what we see despite all obstacles.

AGAIN: Not everyone will be enthusiastic about the granting of autonomy to the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America. What criticisms do you see coming from the outside? Will these present a difficulty in terms of unifying Orthodox groups here?

We hope that everyone will be enthusiastic about our self-rule, because it is the will of God and the will of our God-loving people. At the 2001 Archdiocese Convention in Los Angeles, California, 97.7% of our people voted for self-rule. I am most thankful to our Antiochian people. In all of our deliberations, they were of one heart and one mind; this is precisely why we got this self-rule without any division in our Archdiocese. This is very rare in modern Orthodox history. Yes, there may be some criticism from the outside, from selfish patriarchs who do not understand the movements of history, from persons who enjoy life in the grave of history. We say to such people, “The Holy Spirit is not dead. The Holy Spirit is a lifegiving Spirit and is always working in the Church despite our sinfulness. What He requires from us is a positive response to His divine challenge.” This criticism, however, will not present an insurmountable difficulty. Orthodoxy unity in North American is inevitable, despite some frozen-minded bishops.

AGAIN: Do you see other North American jurisdictions, such as the Greek Archdiocese, following suit and achieving a similar degree of autonomy from the Mother Churches?

Unfortunately, the Ecumenical Patriarchate is experiencing its long, dark night. It has problems in Estonia, Australia, and North America, and some problems with the Church of Greece, just to mention a few. Thus, despite the fact that many Greek-Americans would like to emulate our example, it is not going to be easy for them to escape from the grip of the Ecumenical Patriarch.

We thank God that Patriarch Ignatius and the Holy Synod of Antioch have a sense of history and were able to put the interest of the Church above their own. If the Greek-Americans succeed in their quest for autonomy, this will be a tremendous step forward toward Orthodox unity, and other jurisdictions will follow.

AGAIN: How is this likely to affect your relationship with the Orthodox Church in America?

We have always had good relations with the Orthodox Church in America, and we will continue to do so. How far can we go in our relationship? This depends on the leadership of the Orthodox Church in America. I do not know if the Orthodox Church in America has a clear vision for the future.

AGAIN: Is this the beginning of a process which will one day give birth to a unified, united Orthodox Church here in North America?

I have no doubt that this process will continue. I pray, however, that it will continue peacefully without causing any schism in the Church. Our Orthodox people on this continent have matured and are ready to put their house in North America in order. We need some courageous religious leaders to lead with clear visions for the future. The scripture says: “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18). Despite our various national backgrounds, I believe Orthodox unity, with diversity, is very possible.

AGAIN: You have spoken frequently over the years about our need as Orthodox in North America to come out of the ethnic ghettos. You have said this will allow us to reach out to the vast multitudes on this continent, speaking to them with a unified voice in a language they can understand, and with a faith that is alive and full of the Holy Spirit. Do you feel that this move towards autonomy will help in this regard? If so, how?

I thank God that the Antiochian Archdiocese is no longer an ethnic ghetto, liturgically or otherwise. If you examine the tremendous number of convert clergy and laity in our Archdiocese, you will know what I mean. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). In the Archdiocese, we are all one in the body of Christ.

When students apply to us to attend the seminary, our Review Board does not examine their applications based on national background, but rather on their qualifications. In the Antiochian House of Studies, we have students from all jurisdictions and many national backgrounds, especially from overseas. I hope our blessed move toward self-rule will reinforce what I have been teaching and preaching for the past thirty-eight years of my episcopacy.



Top: Metropolitan PHILIP with Patriarch IGNATIUS IV.

Bottom (left to right): Dr. George Farha, Metropolitan PHILIP, Patriarch IGNATIUS IV, Mr. Fawaz El Khoury, and Father Joseph Antipas, during the Metropolitan's recent trip to Damascus.

Moreover, I hope that our self-rule will encourage clergy and laity of other jurisdictions to be bold enough to think of our children and future generations. America is thirsty for the holy Orthodox faith. What is happening in the Episcopal and Roman churches is very indicative of this reality. According to statistics, there are about sixty-six million unchurched Americans. Don't you think it is our responsibility to bring them to the true Orthodox faith, the "faith which once and for all was delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3)?

Our Department of Missions and Evangelism, under the leadership of the Very Reverend Peter Gillquist, has brought many thousands of people to the true faith. Can you imagine how many people we can bring to this true faith if we have a united Orthodox Department of Missions and Evangelism? I beseech my brothers, the Orthodox hierarchs, and the clergy and laity of other jurisdictions, to seek self-rule for the sake of Orthodoxy in this hemisphere.

AGAIN: Here is a question which is hard to ask, but which I'm sure many readers will want to hear you address. As you look ahead to the future of Orthodoxy in North America and generations yet to be born, a future which you have worked so hard to help shape and define, and which you have sacrificed so much to help establish, what do you envision? When some day in the years to come, you must say, as St. Simeon, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace," for what do you hope? What are your dreams regarding Orthodoxy here after you are gone?

This question is not hard to ask at all. It has been present in my mind since 1968, when I had my heart attack in Washington, D.C., and since 1972 at the Miami Heart Institute, when I had open heart surgery.

When I was consecrated Metropolitan of this God-protected Archdiocese in 1966, I was young, full of energy, and full of pride. I had my own agenda. I wanted to reorganize the Archdiocese, and to unite Orthodoxy in America in the twinkling of an eye. I wanted to feed the poor everywhere, to end the war in Viet Nam, to bring a just peace to the Middle East, and so on. Little did I know that God does not work according to my agenda, but to His. This compassionate God "has chastened me and I was chastened. . ." (Jeremiah 31:18).

Before my heart surgery, I surrendered completely to God. By so doing, I felt at peace. It is ironic that in order to be liberated, we must surrender. I said to God, "My life belongs to You. If You want me to depart, I will do Your will, and if You want me to sail to Your shores, I am ready."

We have done much during the past thirty-eight years. Yet there is still much to be done. Our Lord said, "My Father is still working and I am working" (John 5:17).

Future Orthodox generations expect much from us. First and foremost, they expect Orthodox unity. We are not going to push a button and eliminate ethnicity. What we are seeking is unity with diversity. We can organize a synod in North America to address all uncanonical issues which we are facing, such as the interference of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in the internal affairs of the Antiochian Archdiocese. We have a complete break of canonical order in this country. This must be addressed.

Continued on page 8



HOLY SYNOD OF ANTIOCH GRANTS SELF-RULE TO THE ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA

On Thursday, October 9th, 2003, the Holy Synod of Antioch voted unanimously to grant self-rule to the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. The full text of the authorized English translation of the Synodal Resolution is included below.

Resolution of the Holy Synod Regarding the Status of the Antiochian Archdiocese in North America

1. Self rule and Jurisdiction

The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America is and shall remain self-ruled within its present jurisdiction (The United States of America and Canada) and shall constitute one unified ecclesiastical Antiochian entity.

2. Governance

The Archdiocese is governed by the Holy Scripture, the Sacred Tradition, the Holy Canons, the Constitution of the Church of Antioch and this Synodical resolution and by its Constitution and Bylaws.

3. Recognition of Auxiliary Bishops as Diocesan Bishops and Local Synod

Upon adoption of this resolution, the Auxiliary Bishops of the Archdiocese shall become Diocesan Bishops and bear their given titles. The Diocesan Bishops will constitute under the Metropolitan the Local Synod of the Archdiocese which will be its governing authority. The Local Synod shall determine the number of dioceses and their boundaries.

4. Procedure of election of Diocesan Bishops

- A. The General Assembly of the Archdiocese will nominate three candidates for a Diocesan Bishop. When Diocesan Assemblies shall be constituted the nominations shall then be made, by the said assemblies.
- B. The Patriarch of Antioch shall delegate two or three Metropolitans to participate on behalf of the Holy Synod together with the Local Synod in the election of the Diocesan Bishops. The Metropolitan shall preside over the electoral assembly.
- C. The consecration and enthronement of the Bishops shall be accomplished in North America by the Metropolitan, the Patriarchal Delegate and the members of the Local Synod.
- D. In case of insufficient number of qualified nominees from the Archdiocesan clergy, the Archdiocese shall nominate from the list of nominations kept in the Patriarchal records.

5. Procedure of election of the Metropolitan Primate

The Metropolitan Primate shall be nominated according to the Constitution of the Church of Antioch and the Constitution and Bylaws of the Archdiocese. The three nominees for the office of Metropolitan Primate shall be submitted to the Holy Synod of Antioch to elect one of them. The Metropolitan shall be a member of the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate as well as of the Local Synod of the Archdiocese.

6. Right of appeal and Synaxis

In all matters of hierarchical discipline, Bishops of the Local Synod have the right to appeal to the Patriarch of Antioch and the Holy Synod. The Archdiocesan Bishops, after consultation with the Metropolitan, shall attend the gatherings or synaxis of the Antiochian Bishops which may be called from time to time by the Patriarch of Antioch.

7. Decisions of the Holy Synod of Antioch

The decisions of the Holy Synod of Antioch shall be binding on the Archdiocese on matters of doctrine, liturgy, sacraments, relations with autocephalous Orthodox Churches and ecumenical policy with regard to other Christian and non-Christian bodies.

8. Amendment and translation

The Patriarchate of Antioch and the Archdiocese shall each amend its constitution in accordance with the above. The Archdiocese shall submit its amended constitution to the Holy Synod of Antioch for approval. The Arabic text of this resolution and its English translation shall have equal force and validity. ❖

DID YOU KNOW . . .

❖ That the Orthodox Church is composed at present of the following **"autocephalous"** Churches:

The four ancient Patriarchates:

- Constantinople (the Ecumenical Patriarchate)
- Alexandria
- Antioch
- Jerusalem

several other Patriarchates (autocephalous churches headed by a Patriarch):

- Russia (the Moscow Patriarchate)
- Serbia
- Romania
- Bulgaria
- Georgia

and several other autocephalous churches headed by an Archbishop or Metropolitan:

- Cyprus
- Greece
- Poland
- Albania
- Czech & Slovak Republics
- The Orthodox Church in America

An autocephalous church is self-governing. It possesses the right to resolve all internal problems on its own authority and has the ability to choose its own bishops (including the Patriarch, Archbishop, or Metropolitan who heads the church).

❖ That there are, in addition, several Churches which are **"autonomous"**:

- Finland, dependent on the Ecumenical Patriarchate
- Estonia, dependent on the Ecumenical Patriarchate
- Sinai, dependent on the Patriarchate of Jerusalem
- Japan, dependent on the Moscow Patriarchate
- China, dependent on the Moscow Patriarchate
- Ukraine, dependent on the Moscow Patriarchate
- and now, the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America, dependent on the Patriarchate of Antioch

While self-ruling in most respects, an autonomous church has not yet attained full independence from its mother church. The head of the church must be confirmed in office by the Holy Synod of its mother church.

❖ Although each church acts independently, they all remain in sacramental and canonical communion with one another.

Note: there is not complete consensus on the specific self-governing status of all of the churches.

Continued from page 6

I envision an autocephalous Orthodox Church which would put an end to all this uncanonical chaos in North America. I do not think I will see that in my lifetime. However, no one can turn back the wheels of history. Christ did not establish His Church to leave it to the wolves. The future generations will enjoy all the fruits of a united Orthodoxy in our country. I envision tens of thousands of Americans joining the Orthodox Church, if we are united. As far as St. Simon's prayer is concerned, I do not know when God is going to take me home, but I am ready. And when I go, I will go happily, because at least I have tried.

AGAIN: Let s look back the other direction for a moment. As you look back over the many years of your episcopal leadership over the archdiocese, what are your fondest memories? What successes do you prize most highly? What do you hope your legacy will be?

While I am always looking towards the future, I don't mind looking towards the past because I am a student of history. Despite the obstacles of the past, the past remains rich and sweet. The most productive years of my episcopacy were the years after my heart surgery. Every moment of my life became an urgent moment, and every day seemed like the last day.

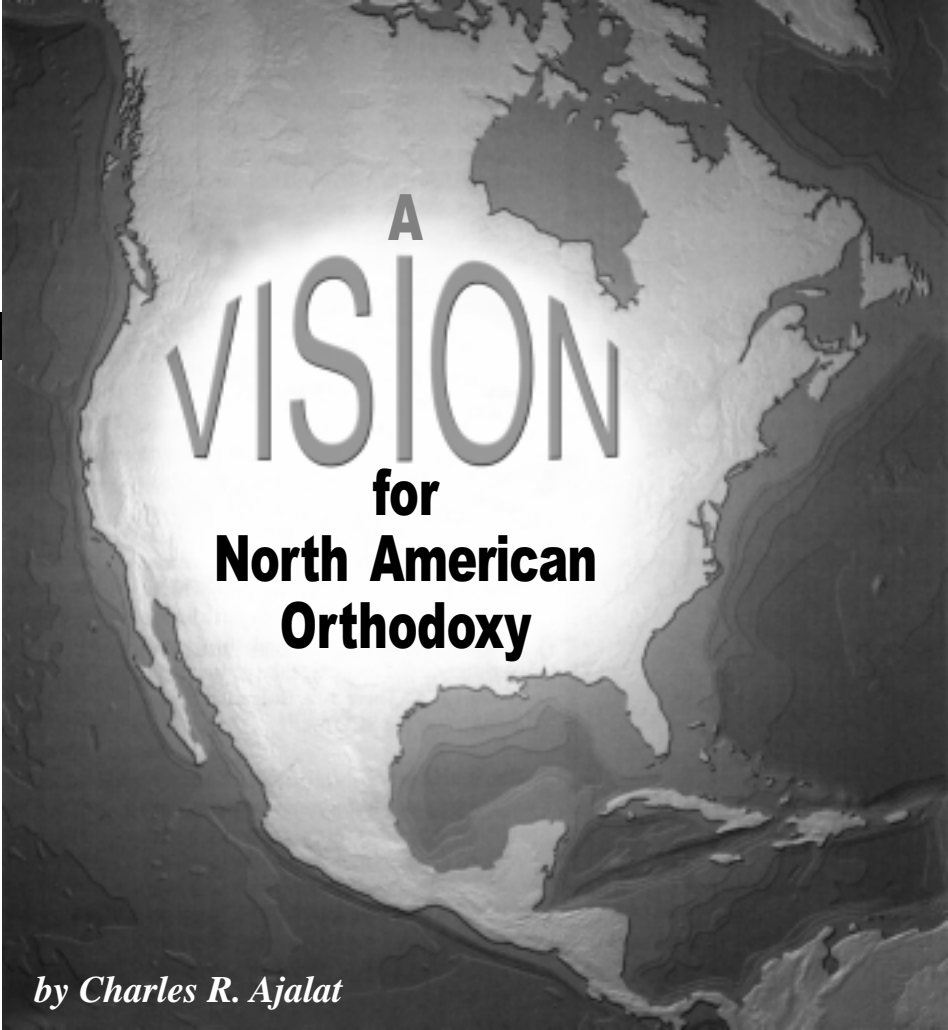
Some of my fondest memories from the past are my encounters with little children. When our Lord said, "Truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3), He was, as always, teaching us the truth. Some of the children's questions were serious. Some were funny, such as "Do you live behind the altar?"; "Are you the Margarine King?"; "Were you born a bishop?"; "Your M & M (Eminence), when are you going home?"

Much of my success happened in the Seventies. I think of the founding of the Antiochian Women and of the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch; the purchase of the Antiochian Village, the beginning of our camping program and the reorganization of our youth. Then there is the first visit of our Antiochian Patriarch to America; the consecration of territorial bishops, soon to be diocesan bishops; and the visits of Patriarch Ignatius in 1985 and 1999. Then there is a very important event in the life of Orthodoxy in North America, the reception of the former Evangelical Orthodox Church into canonical Orthodoxy in 1987.

These are but some of the prized moments in the history of my episcopacy. Last but not least is the obtaining of self-rule for our Archdiocese. This was one of my most difficult and yet joyful experiences. I am eternally indebted to the hierarchs, the clergy, and the laity of this Archdiocese. Without them self-rule would never have been achieved.

AGAIN: Do you have anything to add, have we missed anything? Please give your blessing.

May God bless you, your co-workers, and finally may He bless AGAIN Magazine. ❖



A VISION for North American Orthodoxy

by *Charles R. Ajalat*

Late this summer, I had two close brushes with death. Through God's grace, and by the fervent prayer of righteous people (James 5:16) as well as the skillful hands of the medical team, I was brought back to life. These experiences led me to reflect deeply upon what is important in life, namely my own salvation, my family, and the Church.

As I reflected upon the Church as Eucharist, I felt unmitigated joy and thanksgiving. As I reflected, however, upon the Church as administration, I felt both joy and sadness. These emotions haunted me throughout my recovery, and finally led me to commit my thoughts to paper in hopes that they would provide both encouragement and exhortation to others. In this spirit, I commend them to the readers of *AGAIN* Magazine.

Governmental Chaos and a Bright Star

In the mid-1960s at Harvard, we undergrads were very excited about what seemed to be happening in North American Orthodoxy—the unification of the Church and an increased witness to North America. Since that time, however, we have not moved much in terms of administrative

unity. This is so even though administrative unity is a canonical and practical imperative, and is historically inevitable. As I reflect upon the administration of the Church, I also think about the incredible historical significance of the autonomy or self-rule recently granted to the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America.

To be blunt, the governance of Orthodoxy in today's world is in shambles. The Ecumenical Patriarchate has caused or furthered division around the world—from America, Western Europe, and Australia to the Ukraine, Estonia, Greece, and elsewhere. The Jerusalem Patriarchate, with the blessings of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, has attempted unsuccessfully to create yet another jurisdiction in North America, and has disrupted relations between two of the key Orthodox jurisdictions here. The Moscow Patriarchate, in attempting to create unity with the former church in exile, may well create yet another jurisdiction on this continent.

Amidst this chaos, a bright and shining star from God has arisen. Through the grace of the Holy Spirit, the visionary Patriarch and Holy Synod of Antioch have granted the bold request of Metropolitan

PHILIP and the faithful in the Antiochian Archdiocese here for autonomy. The hallmarks of this grant are the right to self-rule and the right to nominate (by the clergy and laity), and elect and consecrate (by the local Holy Synod), our own diocesan bishops. Self-rule must and does also include the right to have our clergy and laity nominate our own primate, and require the Mother Church to choose from our three nominees when electing him. Our self-rule, as with all autonomy, is limited only by the Mother Church's decisions on doctrine, sacraments, foreign relations, and appeals of a diocesan bishop to the Mother Church from defrockment by the local Synod.

The Archdiocese was able to institutionalize a physical as well as a spiritual closeness between the Archdiocese and the Mother Church without violating any of these principles of self-rule. This was done by allowing two or three of the metropolitans of the Mother Church to have input and vote with our bishops when we elect diocesan bishops. It was also done by allowing our Metropolitan, in addition to presiding over our own local Holy Synod, to remain a member of the Holy Synod of Antioch, and by allowing our bishops to attend gatherings of Antiochian bishops called by the Patriarch.

The Patriarch and Holy Synod of Antioch has granted the Archdiocese this self-rule in part because of their desire to have the peoples of North America see the evangelistic witness of Orthodoxy. They also recognize the canonical imperative that there must someday be an administratively united Orthodox Church on this continent. It is against the laws and tradition of the Church to have multiple jurisdictions on the same territory.

The Mission of Christ's Church

Why does the Orthodox Church in North America need to be administratively united? After all, the jurisdictions of the Church here are already one in doctrine, liturgy, and the sacraments. It seems to me the answer is rooted in missions and evangelism, in the mission of the Church.

The imperative under the ancient Church canons to not have multiple bishops on the same territory serves the purpose of witness and harmony. Perceived division resulting from multiple bishops is a denial to the non-faithful of the unity of Christ's Church, hampering our witness.

This is particularly devastating as a practical matter in a place like North America, where there already exist thousands of Christian denominations, not to mention non-Christian religions. It is even more devastating because the administrative divisions are correctly perceived by non-Orthodox faithful to be based on ethnicity. These "ethnic ghettos" are a denial of the Church being, or even wanting to be, indigenously North American. This is correctly perceived by our children.

The mission of Christ's Church, the Orthodox Church, is to transform the souls of the faithful in Christ and to therefore transform the culture around the Church. This is done through preaching the good news of God becoming man and His death and resurrection for our eternal salvation, and it is done by living lives—individually and corporately—that witness to this great truth. With respect to the need for transformation of the North American culture, few Christians would deny such need.

Administrative unity is not a panacea for the Church here, nor will it keep all of our children in the Church, nor, by itself, will it transform North American culture. Administrative unity also does not address the need for a larger pool from which to draw the Church's episcopal leadership. Administrative unity in North America is, however, an important building block for the future of the Church on this continent and, I believe, for world Orthodoxy.

Are There Two Visions of the Church in North America?

The North American Orthodox jurisdictions appear to be breaking into two camps. There are those whose hierarchs have or may be willing to renew a vision for a single North American Church (such as the OCA and the Antiochians). And there are

those whose hierarchs have a focus primarily on their internal affairs and their Mother Church abroad. While there can, and should, be cooperation between the hierarchs of the two groups, the time has now come for those who hold a common vision of an administratively unified North American Church to focus together, and by themselves, on the issue of administrative unity. And if only a sole Orthodox jurisdiction is able to pursue the dream of witnessing to North America from an indigenous North American perspective, then it must do so. The faithful of all jurisdictions will ultimately welcome either development. All this is so, even though it would be best if all jurisdictions supported and implemented right now a common vision of administrative unity, capitalizing on the momentum of the grant of Antiochian Archdiocese self-rule.

Archbishop SPYRIDON, former Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, recently discussed the future of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese with regard to American Orthodoxy. He recognized the problem that exists:

I cannot see how anyone can be optimistic if the situation continues as it does today. Hundreds of thousands of Greek Americans have left the embrace of the Archdiocese over the past decades. You can count the true friends and supporters of the Ecumenical Patriarchate on the fingers of your hand. In order for the situation to be reversed, many profound changes will need to be made. . . .

[American] Orthodox . . . [are] unable to break the ring of their religious ghettos, to make a dynamic presence in American society and to be part of mainstream and decision-making America.¹

Archbishop SPYRIDON appears to believe, however, that administrative Orthodox unity is not the answer and that this is a dream mainly of the OCA and the Antiochians, as opposed to the Greek

hierarchy. He went on to say:

The presence of all Orthodox of various nationalities under one supranational—namely American—autocephalous institution, has been mainly a dream nourished by the Russian and Arab Orthodox in America. However, many Greek Orthodox clerics and laymen, especially the Greek Orthodox OCL [Orthodox Christian Laity], aspire to an autocephalous status. This solution would lead each Orthodox group to hastily rid its national characteristics and to form a fully Americanized entity without any national references at all. Personally, I do not think this solution can be regarded as very promising.

Hopefully Archbishop SPYRIDON is wrong.

Not only do a large part of the priests and laity of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese desire administrative unity, the dream of unity has been part of their own heritage from the beginning. Essentially at its founding in 1922, Ecumenical Patriarch MELETIOS IV said:

I saw the largest and best part of the Orthodox Church in the Diaspora, and I understood how exalted the name of Orthodoxy could be, especially in the United States of America, if more than two million Orthodox people there were united into one church organization, an American Orthodox Church.

How many millions would be joined to the Church today had this prophetic vision been implemented? Sadly, under the leadership of the current Ecumenical Patriarch, this vision appears to be drifting farther away rather than coming closer. He led an attempt to change the 1977 Charter of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese (which can only be changed with the consent of the Clergy-Laity Congress) to a Patriarchal Charter placing the control of all decision-making in Constantinople. He has also



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ignored thirty amendments to the Patriarchal Charter proposed by the Clergy-Laity Congress. As Archbishop SPYRIDON, the former Archbishop of the Greek Archdiocese of America, said in the interview quoted above:

The difficulty now lies in the fact that, in compliance with the Archdiocesan charter hitherto valid and approved by the Patriarchate Synod in 1977, no charter modifications can be made without the approval of the Clergy-Laity Congress. And there has been no such approval to this day. I now hear that reactions to the procedures followed in this case are slowly but surely growing. In this effort, the OCL, the well-known para-ecclesiastical organization which played a major role in rejecting the Patriarchal draft in Los Angeles, is again a protagonist. Today, this organization is active in sensitizing the Greek Orthodox communities on the issue at hand, while at the same time it continues to systematically promote autonomy. The situation, as you can see, is becoming precarious once more.

The Antiochian situation is in contrast to the situation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese. Echoing Patriarch MELETIOS, the late Antiochian Patriarch ELIAS said in a 1977 interview, published in *A Man of Love*:

Our position is clear. . . . We affirm that in North America there should be an autocephalous church with its own Patriarch and Holy Synod. However, all Mother Churches must agree on this point, and more importantly, the faithful in North America must do their part to make independence and unity a reality and not just a written Tomos.

Through his courageous act in granting self-rule to the Antiochian Archdiocese of

North America, Patriarch IGNATIUS has advanced the vision of his predecessor, recognized the maturity of all the North American faithful, and furthered the cause of a unified Church.

Current Inter-Orthodox Cooperative Efforts

As Patriarch ELIAS said, “the faithful in North America must do their part to make independence and unity a reality.” We constructively criticize the hierarchs for failing to achieve Orthodox administrative unity. But what about the beautiful common actions that have thus far been achieved by the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA)? What about International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC), and the first and historic conference of all North American Orthodox bishops at Ligonier, Pennsylvania, in 1994, which called for Orthodox unity, evangelization of North America, and cooperative action? Don’t these actions lead to administrative unity among the hierarchs?

Having been a part of these SCOBA agencies since the very beginning, I can say that the people involved have incredibly good hearts and do incredibly good work. While the agencies do unify some of the faithful, they do not unify the hierarchs and they also have two limitations.

First, they operate within a difficult, non-unified hierarchical climate. This was clearly revealed in 1994 when the Ecumenical Patriarch forced the resignation of Archbishop IAKOVOS of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese for meeting at Ligonier and for even *suggesting* an ad-

ministratively unified hierarchy in North America. The subsequent conference of the bishops, “allowed” by the Ecumenical Patriarch and held in Washington D.C. in 2000, did not even attempt to deal with the real issues facing the Church here or abroad.

The second limitation on the SCOBA agencies is one of focus. The witness by such agencies has tended to center primarily on activities abroad (following the lead of their hierarchs). This has taken place at the expense of the vineyard in which God has placed them, here in North America. Not only is evangelism to the many, many millions of unchurched North Americans not an important focus of OCMC, it is unanswered in a unified fashion by the jurisdictions here. For this, we will all answer to God.

For the needs of the North American hungry, the homeless, the unwed mothers, the abused spouses, the prisoners, students on drugs and alcohol, and others of our brothers and sisters in Christ in need, we will also answer to God. We pray that IOCC will one day not only have a “U.S. country program” like it now has an “Ethiopian program,” but that serving the vineyard in which God has placed us will be an equally large ministry with serving God’s children throughout the world.

Principles of Implementation of Administrative Unity

Those jurisdictions here which do have a common vision for an administratively-unified North American Church must implement this vision while recognizing three principles.

The first is that Orthodox administrative unity on this continent is inevitable.



“Significant concrete steps directed specifically toward administrative unity at the hierarchical level should be taken now by the Mother Churches and / or the Churches here in North America.”

Many of the Mother Churches have fallen into the delusion of not recognizing this, yet it is only a question of time. It is only a question of whether it will happen now or when the Church overall, through loss of communicants, becomes smaller and smaller and less and less helpful to the goals the Mother Churches might be otherwise seeking. Significant concrete steps directed specifically toward administrative unity at the hierarchical level should be taken now by the Mother Churches and / or the Churches here in North America.

The second principle is that Orthodox unity here cannot be at the expense of the well-being of the Orthodox Church throughout the world. Just as the local parish is the fullness of the Orthodox Church, just as the national church is the fullness of the Orthodox Church, the Church throughout the world is one and is the fullness of the Church. In particular, as each daughter owes an incredible debt of gratitude and love to her mother, so it is in Christ's Church. We must say to the Mother Churches, “We can be of greater service to you if we are united here.” And these must not be words alone, but must be put into significant, concrete action. If at all possible there must be unity here without division between the parts of the Church here and the Mother Churches.

The Antiochian model of self-rule for the Archdiocese here is in this respect one of brilliance or, better yet, of grace. While granting the full hallmarks of an autonomous Church, such as control of elections of diocesan bishops, the hierarchs of the Holy Synod of Antioch, through love and God's grace, simultaneously emphasized the spiritual and even physical unity of the

Church in North America with the ancient Patriarchate of Antioch. It is a model that, if followed by others, would strengthen all of the Mother Churches while laying the groundwork for accomplishing administrative unity on this continent, to the glory of God.

The Antiochian model is historic in a very special sense. The previous self-governance achieved by Orthodox jurisdictions (the Romanian Archdiocese, and the autocephalous Orthodox Church in America) resulted from having to deal with the historical aftermath of the persecution of the Church in Russia and Eastern Europe by the Communists. The Antiochian Archdiocese self-rule is a result, for the first time, of the recognition by the priests, deacons, and laity of the Church here, and the hierarchs here and abroad, of the growth, assimilation, and maturity of the Church in North America.

The third principle is that in the implementation of Orthodox unity the Church here must pastorally care for all its faithful: current and future. As the Church here administratively unifies, there will continue to be communities that carry on traditions brought to North America by generations of Orthodox immigrants from many different countries. There will also be communities that build on the traditions of those of all races and ethnic groups who have come to Orthodoxy, but whose ancestors were not Orthodox themselves.

The uniqueness of America, a land of immigrants, presents an opportunity for the Church to provide a home for many different kinds of customs within one Orthodox Christian faith. Even now in the Antiochian Archdiocese, there exist entire

communities of non-“cradle” Orthodox, of different ethnic backgrounds. These communities of North American Orthodox—whose ancestries are, for example, Anglo-Saxon, Puerto Rican, El Salvadoran, or Black—add to the richness of the Archdiocese. As Metropolitan PHILIP often says, in discussing unity between Greek-Americans, Arab-Americans, Russian-Americans, and so on, there must be “unity with diversity.”

So What Is the Goal?

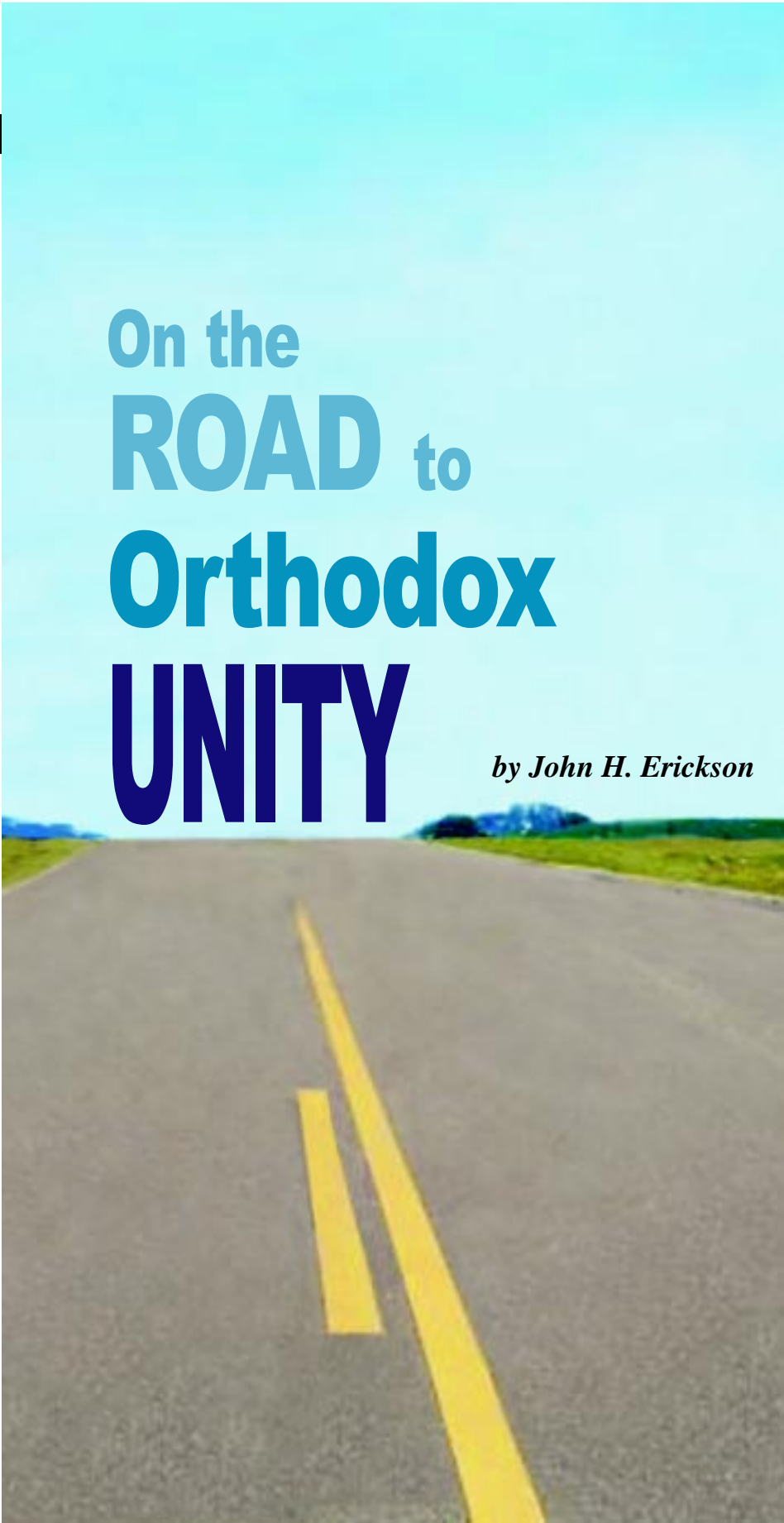
The goal of those who share a vision of unity is that there be one primate in North America, a Patriarch, surrounded by his metropolitans, bishops, and other clergy, and a unified laity. This way we would unite our efforts to present the Orthodox Faith to this land. Imagine the joy the converts to Orthodoxy would experience, not having to decide which of the many jurisdictions to join!

Two thousands years ago, our Lord Jesus Christ prayed for the Church to His Father, “that they may be one as We are” (John 17:11). By the grace of the Holy Spirit we Orthodox in North America are one in doctrine and worship. Let's finish the task and be one administratively, for the sake of witnessing to the gospel and complying with the canons of the Church.

Having recently flirted with death, I pray that before I stand at the dread judgment seat of Christ my life may be transformed, according to His will. But I pray also that through one united North American Orthodox Church, the culture of this continent may be transformed as well, and resound to His glory. ❖

Mr. Charles R. Ajalat is Chancellor of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese, a participant in its recent request for autonomy, an organizer of the 1994 Conference of Bishops at Ligonier, and a founder of IOCC and OCMC.

1. An Interview with Spyridon, Former Archbishop of America, by Despina Syriopoulou, TGA News.com, 2/26/03.



On the ROAD to Orthodox UNITY

by *John H. Erickson*

The recent decision of the Holy Synod of Antioch to grant self-rule to the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America has received a mixed response from Orthodox Christians in North America and abroad. Far too many have responded to the decision with indifference, considering this to be simply an Antiochian matter, unimportant for their own lives as Orthodox Christians. Some—particularly in the Old World patriarchates—have reacted to the decision with alarm or veiled hostility. They claim Orthodoxy in America is not mature enough for self-rule. They argue that the American flock still needs the pastoral care and supervision of mother churches in traditionally Orthodox lands—even though many of these lands are overwhelmingly non-Christian at this point! But many other Orthodox Christians in America—and certainly within the Orthodox Church in America (OCA)—have greeted the decision with subdued but genuine enthusiasm, as an important milestone in the quest for Orthodox unity in America.

The decision on self-rule affirms the *capacity* of the Antiochian Archdiocese for self-rule. It recognizes in an explicit way the *maturity* that the archdiocese already has attained. Across jurisdictional lines, many Orthodox Christians are convinced that American Orthodoxy as a whole has reached a much higher level of maturity than the Old World patriarchates have been willing to acknowledge. Here it is enough to point to the fate of the 1994 Ligonier Statement on the Church in North America. It drew attention to “the fullness of the faith that we have lived and experienced here for the past two hundred years” and appealed, in a respectful way, for North American representation in future inter-Orthodox discussion of the “diaspora question.” But the statement met with a generally negative response from the patriarchates, frustrating hopes for a coherent movement towards Orthodox unity in America. The decision of the Holy Synod of Antioch concerning self-rule for the AOCA, like the Russian Orthodox

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Church’s grant of autocephaly to the OCA in 1970, represents a welcome exception to this pattern. It recognizes that Orthodoxy in America has developed beyond a state of infancy, that it is sufficiently mature to manage its own affairs and to relate in a new way to its mother church.

Critics of the Antiochian decision on self-rule, like critics of the 1970 proclamation of the OCA’s autocephaly, have argued that such matters require pan-Orthodox discussion and consensus. They hold that the future course of Orthodoxy in America and other regions of the so-called “diaspora” should be left to a Great and Holy Council of the Orthodox Church. Ideally this may be so. But such a council, despite many decades of preparation, shows no sign of meeting any time in the foreseeable future. Moreover, pan-Orthodox discussions of such subjects as autonomy, autocephaly, and the diaspora have concentrated on only a very limited range of questions.

In pan-Orthodox discussion thus far, the question most often asked has been, “Who has the right to grant autonomy or autocephaly?” But the significance and meaning of the terms in question have been left relatively unexplored. All too often, the rhetoric employed by all parties suggests that they are operating with inappropriate institutional models drawn from the secular world. Churches outside traditionally Orthodox countries that seek a higher mea-

sure of self-rule are regarded as rebellious overseas colonies bent on the kind of independence that the modern sovereign state enjoys in the secular sphere. Here we must all seek to purify our thinking. In an Orthodox understanding, self-rule—whether partial or complete—does not mean that a church can simply ignore the bonds of communion that link it to the other Orthodox churches. Neither does it mean that a church can disregard basic canonical principles in organizing its own internal life.

The word “canonical”—or more often the word “uncanonical”—is frequently heard in discussions concerning the state of the Church in America. Sometimes one gets the mistaken impression that the more completely a church is subjected to its mother church, the more canonical it becomes. But being under the protection of a distant higher authority is not the only measure of canonicity. To be truly canonical, a local church must have appropriate conciliar structures, with a real synod of bishops headed by its own primate. Healthy and authentic Orthodox church administration requires both conciliarity and primacy, expressed at all levels. It requires cooperation and mutual accountability. It also requires unity of vision and leadership. By creating true dioceses within the one archdiocese, by providing for the election of diocesan bishops within the archdiocese itself, and by clearly defin-

ing the position of the metropolitan-primate, self-rule for the Antiochian Archdiocese significantly strengthens its witness to basic Orthodox canonical principles. This makes the archdiocese more “canonical” in the true sense of that word, not less.

Through the centuries, the great strength of Orthodoxy has been its ability to adapt to new situations while remaining faithful to its own deepest insights. In the ordering of its life, the Orthodox Church has insisted on the importance of unity. It has insisted that in Christ natural divisions—of Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female—are transcended. It has proclaimed that in Him we are truly united in ever-deeper communion with the Father and with each other.

The great tragedy of Orthodoxy in America is that, all too often, we have failed to put this fundamental insight into practice. To those around us, we appear to be a hopelessly divided collection of immigrant ethnic enclaves. And, to be honest, we ourselves—not to mention the churches of the Old World—have done very little to change this perception. We have been content to live in our divided state, accepting this as perfectly natural. Even though we are in America, we fail to recognize that we have a mission here—a God-given responsibility to proclaim the Church’s message of unity in Christ in this new cultural context.

In America, we Orthodox Christians have remarkable opportunities to witness to our faith. Among other things, we have an opportunity to demonstrate—in many concrete ways—that unity and diversity are not mutually exclusive principles and that our various cultural patrimonies can in fact be a source of mutual enrichment. As Fr. Alexander Schmemmann said nearly thirty years ago in *Orthodox America, 1794–1976*, “The unique peculiarity of American Orthodoxy—and this almost from its beginning—is that it became a living encounter, after centuries of mutual isolation and even alienation, of virtually all Orthodox traditions, of all treasures accumulated throughout centuries. Land of immigrants,

America is therefore the land where the heritage of some can become the heritage of all, where, in other words, a living synthesis is the very form of life.”

We Orthodox Christians in America already are demonstrating the power of this “living synthesis” through our cooperation in inter-Orthodox agencies—IOCC, OCMC, Project Mexico—and also in institutions like St. Vladimir’s Seminary, where students, faculty, staff, and trustees from a variety of jurisdictional and cultural backgrounds work together on a daily basis. But obviously much more is needed. This “living synthesis” must include, in a more intentional way, not just the various Orthodox ethnic groups that came to America in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and established our present

plethora of jurisdictions. It must include converts as well as cradle Orthodox, new immigrants as well as well-established “hyphenated Americans” (Greek-Americans, Serbian-Americans, Russian-Americans, and so on). In all these areas, the Antiochian Archdiocese has been a pioneer. The vitality of the archdiocese demonstrates that the “living synthesis” of which Fr. Schmemmann spoke is more than empty rhetoric and wishful thinking. The recent decision on self-rule for the archdiocese can only enhance its ability to advance the cause of full Orthodox unity in America. ❖

John H. Erickson is Dean of St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary as well as that institution’s Peter N. Gramowich Professor of Church History.

Quote This . . .

Where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and all grace.

—Bishop Irenaeus of Lyons.
Against Heresies

I advise you, be eager to act always in godly concord. . . . Let there be nothing among you which will have power to divide you, but be united with the bishop and with those who preside, for an example and instruction in incorruptibility.

—St. Ignatius of Antioch,
Epistle to the Magnesians

No one is saved alone. He who is saved is saved in the Church, as a member of her and in union with all her other members. If anyone believes, he is in the communion of faith; if he loves, he is in the communion of love; if he prays, he is in the communion of prayer.

—Alekssei Khomiakov,
The Church Is One

Ignorance and sin are characteristic of isolated individuals. Only in the unity of the Church do we find these defects overcome. Man finds his true self in the Church alone; not in the helplessness of spiritual isolation but in the strength of his communion with his brothers and his Savior.

—Fr. Alexander Elchaninov,
The Diary of a Russian Priest

Does the Orthodox Church of today in fact correspond to the picture we get of the congregation of the Apostolic Age when we read the New Testament and the writings of the Apostolic Fathers? It does—as much as a grown-up person corresponds to a picture taken of him as a child. Although the Church has developed, it is the same in essence and spirit in the twentieth century as it has been from the beginning.

—Archbishop Paul of Finland,
The Faith We Hold

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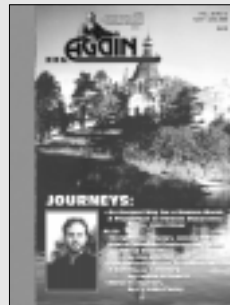
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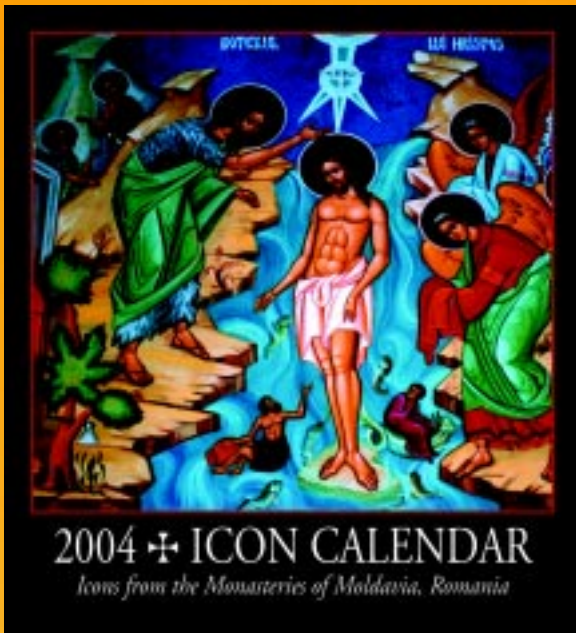
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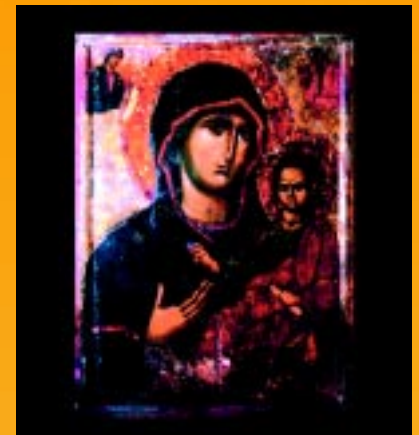
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