Eastern Christianity in the Modern Middle East

Edited by
Anthony O'Mahony and
Emma Loosley

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The Middle East is the birthplace of Christianity and the home to a number of Eastern Churches with millions of followers. Whilst the ancient history of Eastern Christianity in generally familiar to many, the modern history and current situation of the Eastern Churches in the Middle East is less well known.

This collection of contributions by a leading team of scholars aims to fill this significant gap in academic study of the modern religious and political history of the Middle East. Exploring the early and modern history of Christianity in the Middle East region, chapters cover the various expressions of Eastern Christianity: Armenian, Coptic, Greek, Chaldean and Assyrian Church of the East, Maronite, and Syrian, thus enabling the reader to gain a broad understanding of how history continues to locate and inform Christian identity today.

This comprehensive account of the principal historic expressions of Eastern Christianity in the modern Middle East will be a unique contribution to the academic literature, appealing to students and scholars from a wide spectrum of disciplines: Middle Eastern studies; Modern Christianity; theology, history and politics; Religious Studies and Diaspora Studies; as well as to those wishing to gain a better grasp and understanding of the religious and political diversity which informs the modern Middle East.

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Contents

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1 Peter, Paul and James of Jerusalem

The doctrinal and political evolution of the Eastern and Oriental Churches

Emma Loosley

Introduction

At a time when events in the Middle East dominate world headlines and so much time and effort is spent trying to unravel the religious, ethnic, political, economic and social challenges of the region, one group is consistently absent from debate about the future of the area. This is the native Christian population who, throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, have felt increasingly marginalised and besieged by the hostilities around them. Both Muslims and Jews have a tendency to view them as fifth columnists there to promote a pro-western agenda to the detriment of 'native' interests and this totally disregards the fact that these are people who have always lived in the Middle East, and culturally and socially have no affinity with the West. It also demonstrates how Western Christendom has become divorced from its origins in forgetting that this population is living in the region, sharing a cultural heritage with and, in some cases, speaking the language of Christ himself. This is an issue that needs to be underlined, and it is hoped that this book will allow both specialists and general readers some degree of understanding into the daily realities of these Oriental Christians who spread geographically from the Eastern Mediterranean to the borders of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

As a direct consequence of this ignorance, Western Christians often fail to understand the multiplicity of Church denominations native to the Christian heartlands of the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East. Whereas it should come as no surprise that the very area that saw the birth of the religion should be home to an astounding diversity of Churches, media reports of the Near and Middle East rarely mention the Christian inhabitants of the region. 'Eastern Christianity' is largely associated with the Orthodox Christians of Greece and Eastern Europe; and those Christians further east, whether the minorities of Syria and Palestine or the Christian Republics of Armenia and Georgia in the Caucasus, are often forgotten.

To the outsider, the world of Oriental Christianity can be extremely confusing; visit a city like Aleppo in Syria, home to a sizable Christian minority, and you will find at least twelve denominations to choose from. Most local

Christians are tribal in their affiliation to their Church and, when you hear mention of a 'mixed marriage', people are referring to a young person who has married into another denomination – not another religion or race as the term implies in Europe.

Therefore this chapter seeks to offer an introduction to the plethora of denominations that co-exist in the Middle East. It will begin with a brief overview of the earliest spread of Christianity in the region in the aftermath of Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection and explain how doctrinal and political factors shaped the Christian map of the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond. By seeking to place these different Churches in their historical and doctrinal contexts, it is hoped that this will enable the reader to better interpret the following chapters of the book where detailed analyses are given of specific denominations.

From the age of the Apostles until the reign of Constantine

The vast range of early Christian texts still extant, and the fact that discoveries are still being made in the deserts and monasteries of the Near East, attest to the many different sources that were in circulation within several generations of the death of Christ. It is an obvious point, but one that needs reiterating, that the circumstances of the time gave rise to many variants in the message of this new religion. From a movement centred on a particular Jewish community in Roman Palestine these new beliefs spread across the region into Syria, Asia Minor and Egypt before being transferred to the political heart of the Roman Empire in Rome itself. Naturally each one of the early evangelists took their own interpretation of Christ's message and, as each original apostle taught his own group of followers and the message was passed mouth-to-mouth, considerable divergences began to emerge. Linguistically and ethnically diverse, these early leaders spread their message in their mother tongues in a physical, tangible manifestation of Pentecost; it was inevitable that Aramaic, Greek, Hebrew and Latin speakers were all going to chose the phrases that made sense to their own audiences and, as these teachings were passed around orally, it was utterly inevitable that wildly differing recensions of Christ's life would emerge.

Whilst the earliest Christian texts have been dated to the last decades of the first century CE, we have no way of knowing how influential the documents left to us were or whether they are truly representative of the majority of literature circulating at the time. What is clear is that a lack of central authority, perhaps caused by friction between Paul and the Jerusalem party led by James the brother of Jesus (a hostility endlessly speculated on by twenty-first century conspiracy theorists) or alternatively simply a result of disorganisation or the disruption caused by sporadic Roman persecution, led to a multiplicity of what perhaps should be termed as 'Christianities'. This situation of necessity remained in place until the fourth century reign of the Emperor Constantine legitimised the faith and, in the evolving ecclesiastical hierarchy

that swiftly emerged, the incompatibility of regional variations in belief became fully apparent. For the first time Christian leaders could look beyond the basic questions impacting simply on their day-to-day survival and formulate what it meant in a more concrete doctrinal sense to claim to be a 'Christian'.

With the Edict of Toleration issued in Milan in 313 the Christian faith was deemed legitimate, and with this imperial legitimisation came a whole raft of problems for the Church hierarchy; first and foremost was the organisation and significance of such a hierarchy. The oldest Christian communities had bishops that ruled over the flock and in this respect Alexandria and Antioch were viewed as the two most venerable and influential sees, owing to their being the oldest established and largest Christian urban communities. Obviously Jerusalem held a place in the hearts of all Christians, but it was not regarded as a centre for the teaching and propagation of the fledgling faith. From 313 onwards there was no need for Church leaders to hide, and the financial support that Constantine gave his favourite new cult (as this is how the situation was perceived at the time) gave Christian leaders a new problem: how to reconcile their sudden elevation in Roman society and their substantial financial resources with Christ's teachings on poverty and aid to those considered outside the realms of the Roman Commonwealth.

As leaders wrestled with these moral issues and were able to communicate freely for the first time, the different approaches of various groups calling themselves 'Christian' became fully apparent. Under the aegis of a supportive Emperor it was quickly realised that a consensus needed to be reached if Christianity was to retain its influence in Roman society, and this consensus was sought by Constantine himself when he called the Council of Nicaea in 325. It seemed that there were almost as many opinions as there were bishops and, although the basis of a declaration of faith was hammered out at the meeting, many theological disputes remained to be resolved. However, by formulating a statement of faith that was to be followed by all Christians the concept of 'Orthodoxy' can be said to have entered the Church hierarchy for the first time. In its simplest terms Orthodoxy is:

> . . . derived from two Greek words: *orthos*, meaning straight or right and hence correct, and *doxa*, meaning originally opinion (from the verb *dokein* or seem), but also glory or worship. So in the context of religion it is a claim that you are right – in contrast to your opponents who are wrong.[1]

Naturally as soon as a group defines itself as orthodox it automatically places all others who do not conform to this definition as un-orthodox, and therefore as outside the boundaries of what has been deemed acceptable and this is why, although debates had occurred within the Christian community from the time of Christ onwards, after the legitimisation of the Church by Constantine doctrinal beliefs began to be codified and some degree of conformity

demanded from Christian thinkers. Of the many texts in circulation, consensus had to be reached on which teachings supported the official view of Christ that the Church authorities wanted to propagate. Texts that fell outside this framework were in some cases denounced, but mostly quietly fell into abeyance through lack of use.

It was in this environment that the stage was set for schism and, for the first time, the evolution of what became 'Churches' rather than a single, monolithic (and hitherto flexible) Mother Church – a break that would have seemed inconceivable only a few generations before. It was in the fourth century that more decisive action was taken against heresy and by 428 it became necessary for Theodosius II to take action in law to define which groups constituted 'heretics', that is those who had put themselves outside the 'Orthodox' mainstream by their heterodox beliefs. It was shortly after this law was passed that the first significant break with the hierarchy began and with it the beginning of the time of 'Churches' rather than a singular unified 'Church'. This is not the place to write a definitive survey of the heresies that emerged, and in many cases flourished, at this time; however the disputes that split the Christian Commonwealth must be seen as far greater and more influential than the opinions of a few dissident thinkers and it is these differences that will be addressed below.

Ephesus, Chalcedon and a parting of the ways

In 431 the third Ecumenical Council was called at Ephesus in Asia Minor. The first council, as mentioned above, had been called at Nicaea in 325 and had formulated the first dogmatic statement of faith, which was expanded and clarified at the second council held in Constantinople in 381 to answer questions raised regarding the exact role of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity. These initial debates had raised further differences of opinion, particularly in the growing fields of Mariology and Christology and so Ephesus was called to clarify the status of the Virgin Mary. Was she the Theotokos (God-Bearer) as many theologians claimed or was she merely Christotokos (Christ-Bearer), as posited by Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople (428–431)? If the latter were true then the ramifications for the divinity of Christ were enormous as it meant an acceptance that Christ was born as a fully human child who only acquired divinity later in life; if the former definition was accepted it meant that Christ was born divine, but where did this leave the question of his humanity? In the aftermath of the council decision that Mary was indeed the Theotokos, Nestorius was deposed and his followers persecuted as heretics.

As a reaction to this more and more church leaders who followed this way of thinking emigrated to the eastern part of the Roman Empire to escape persecution and ultimately settled in Persia, where they were beyond the reach of Byzantine law. Unlike other Christians they were tolerated, and even welcomed, by the Sassanians as allies in the ongoing hostilities between the two nations.

In contrast to the Christians (*sic*), who were attached to the see at Antioch, the Nestorians were not seen as potential spies but rather as allies in the battle against Byzantium. At the same time the Byzantine emperor's claim to be the sole legitimate representative of the Christian Church was rejected. As a consequence religious persecutions ceased. In the year 484 Barsaumā, a fanatical follower of Nestorianism, used his influence to the effect that the synod of Bēt Lāpāt, supported by the Sasanian ruler Pērōz (459–84), imposed the Nestorian religion on all Christian communities in Persia.[2]

It was this later geographical isolation that gave this Church its name of the Church of the East. The historical label of 'the Nestorian Church' was a pejorative, and in fact incorrect, term as Nestorius was not the originator of the theology he espoused.[3]

Naturally in the aftermath of the Council of Ephesus the designation of Mary as Theotokos invited further debate as to how this impacted on the nature of Christ. By accepting a definition of Theotokos it was clear that Jesus Christ was born divine. This was in keeping with the definition of the Creed, promulgated at Nicaea and clarified at Constantinople, that He was of the 'same substance with the Father' but raised the question as to how He could also be human. The discussion pointed out that if Christ had not also been fully human and felt pain and suffering at the Crucifixion then it could be argued that this sacrifice lost much of its power as a salvific act on behalf of all mankind. In answer to this question an argument was developed that Christ had two natures or *hypostases* within one person that enabled him to be both fully human and fully divine at one and the same time. At the Council of Chalcedon, called in 451 to decide the issue, it was declared that:

> . . . Jesus Christ is fully divine and fully human, 'like us in all things apart from sin'. He is acknowledged 'in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the difference of the natures being in no way abolished by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved, and concurring into one Person and one hypostasis'. This is known as the hypostatic union.[4]

This definition was not acceptable to the party who followed the theology of Eutyches and the leadership of Cyril of Alexandria, and this group, labelled the 'monophysites' from *mono physis* or 'one nature' were outlawed as the supporters of Nestorius had been at the earlier council in Ephesus. So, as the Council of Ephesus ultimately acted as midwife to the Church of the East, Chalcedon performed the same function for the group that became known as the Oriental Orthodox Churches.

Despite this label of 'monophysitism' this group did in fact support the notion of Christ having two natures, but did not believe that these two natures could be divided in the manner proclaimed in the Chalcedonian formula.

Immediately further groups seceded from the imperial definition of Orthodoxy and henceforth there would be a division between the 'Chalcedonians', those in line with the teachings of all the Ecumenical Councils and the 'non-Chalcedonians', those who had gone their own way doctrinally since 451. Once again, the power of the Roman Empire enforced this new definition in the regions closest to the capital, notably in Thrace and Western Asia Minor, but it was harder to keep order further away from Constantinople.

As one of the originators of this anti-Chalcedonian doctrine was Cyril of Alexandria, Egypt entirely rejected the Council of Chalcedon and evolved the institution of the Coptic Orthodox Church, and out of this the later Ethiopian Orthodox Church emerged. In the deserts of Syria and the hills of eastern Asia Minor an itinerant preacher named Jacob Baradaeus, who had earlier enjoyed the patronage of the Empress Theodora, wife of the great Emperor Justinian I (527–265), travelled widely preaching the doctrines espoused by Cyril of Alexandria in the face of imperial persecution. Because of the formative role of Jacob Baradaeus in the creation of this Syrian Church it was called by many the 'Jacobite Church'. However, as with the term 'Nestorian', this is now seen as pejorative and today the Church that Jacob served so faithfully is known as the Syrian Orthodox Church.

The final members of this Oriental Orthodox 'family' were the Armenians and the Georgians. Again their relative safety in the Caucasus and distance from Constantinople saved them and, in the case of Georgia, the evangelization of the region by Syrian missionaries must have had some influence on their doctrinal choices. However, whilst the Armenians have remained anti-Chalcedonian to the present day, the Georgians returned to the Chalcedonian fold in 610 and have therefore been part of the Eastern Orthodox Church family ever since.

Geographically the situation in the east became complex with regard to denominational representation. Whilst the Egyptians and Armenians (also the Georgians) instituted 'National Churches' whereby the whole population followed the same teaching, in Syria the picture was more fragmented. Certain cities, notably Edessa, were fiercely supportive of the Syrian Orthodox cause, but the majority of the Church's support was in the desert and remote villages. Most of the urban population and the Christians of Palestine elected to remain with the Chalcedonians and were dubbed 'Melkites' in the region, as this was a corruption of the local phrase meaning 'of the party of the king'. Latterly this Church has become known as the *Rum* Orthodox Church – *Rum* being derived from the word for the residents of Constantinople and meaning 'Roman'. Nowadays the Rum Orthodox Church denotes those Arabic-speaking Orthodox who follow their Patriarch of Antioch, who in turn acknowledges the supremacy of the Oecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople.

Therefore from the fifth century onwards Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine were home to several different church denominations divided by doctrinal disputes and could no longer be viewed as regions following one, indivisible, Mother Church.

The East and West Syrian traditions: Language, doctrine and politics

A brief digression is necessary at this point to clarify one of the most perplexing aspects of Oriental Christianity for non-specialists, and that is the somewhat mystifying classification of various groups into 'East Syrian' and 'West Syrian'. As the location, contemporary vernacular language, ethnicity and even politics of these peoples are all currently hotly debated as much amongst these groups themselves as they are by outsiders then this needs some explanation.

Firstly it should be clarified that the terminology 'Syrian' in this case derives from a language rather than from the geographical region of that name. Syriac was a dialect of Aramaic that evolved in Edessa in the second century CE. At the time Edessa was in the province of Mesopotamia that straddled the border between the Roman and Parthian Empires, today the city is called Sanliurfa and is in the south east of Turkey near the borders with Syria, Iraq and Iran.

The dialect that evolved in Edessa became the lingua franca of the early Christians in the region and, after the doctrinal rifts that split the early Christian Commonwealth, Syriac was the language used by those who split from the mainstream. First to go, as explained above, were those who refused the rulings of the Council of Ephesus. Due to persecution the followers of the Church of the East took refuge outside the Roman Empire in the east where the Sassanian dynasty had taken power from the Parthians. By passing outside Roman influence into largely mountainous territories in what is now Iran and Iraq, this group isolated themselves from other Christian groups and their traditions and language evolved down a different path from those groups that remained within the Roman orbit.

Twenty years after the Church of the East had seceded, the Council of Chalcedon gave rise to a new group of religious dissidents and, as a group that survived in the villages of the mountains and desert, also used the local vernacular – Syriac – rather than the formal Greek of the wealthy and educated city dwellers. Geographically these non-Chalcedonians were scattered across the south east of Asia Minor, the Syrian Desert and the mountains of Lebanon – all under the jurisdiction of the Romano–Byzantine Empire. This group eventually evolved into the Syrian Orthodox and, later, the Maronite Churches which both continued to use Syriac as their liturgical language long after Arabic became the common language of the region. Naturally these groups had their own dialects and calligraphic peculiarities and these denominations were the basis of the West Syrian tradition.

Therefore, in conclusion, 'East Syrian' refers to the Church of the East and their later Catholic offshoot the Chaldeans (see below) who are resident in contemporary Iran and Iraq and 'West Syrian' the Syrian Orthodox (and Catholics) and the Maronites who are found in south-eastern Turkey, Syria and Lebanon.

Heterodoxy and Catholicism: the Maronites and the advent of Eastern Catholicism

As was illustrated above, the harsher climate of the desert and remote mountain villages were the strongholds of heterodox belief in the doctrinal conflicts that wracked the Christian hierarchy from the fifth century onwards, and one region that remained comfortably isolated from the theological debates was the mountain littoral of what is now Syria and Lebanon. In particular the villages of the Lebanon mountain range provided a perfect refuge from the might of the Emperor if a group wanted to subscribe to an unusual doctrine, and this proved to be the case with the Maronites.

The origins of the Maronites are somewhat mysterious; they take as their founder the ascetic holy man Mar Maron, who was mentioned by Theodoret of Cyrrhus in his *Ecclesiastical History* and traditionally Maron is linked with the village of Brad on the Syrian Limestone Massif. In late antiquity Brad was the administrative centre of the region, boasting baths, administrative buildings and what appears to have been a thriving olive oil industry as well as several large and imposing churches, but it was not here that Maron's followers are first recorded. Theodoret mentions a monastery named Bet Maroun in the vicinity of Apamea far to the south of Brad in the Orontes valley. He claims that in 445 around 400 monks had already joined this foundation to follow Maron and ecclesiastical records do suggest that a large and influential monastery dedicated to Mar Maron existed in the region of Apamea in the fifth-sixth century. However there is then a lacuna and when the Maronites next appear, we seem to be dealing with a very different group from the apparently Chalcedonian monks mentioned in the earlier sources.

This ambiguity relating to Maronite origins seems to have been a result of their being the only group to espouse the doctrine of monothelitism, which put forward the view that Christ had one will but was both man and god. This view was published in the *Ekthesis* of Emperor Heraclius in 638 as he attempted to resolve the two hundred-year-old debate on the nature of Christ and, as with all other attempts to compromise, after a brief acceptance his view was later condemned as heretical at a council in Constantinople in 680. Only the Maronites remained faithful to this belief and, due to the risks of being persecuted by the Byzantines for heresy and the upheaval caused by the Arab invasion, this group retreated to Mount Lebanon where they could found numerous monasteries and hermitages in and around Wadi Qadisha without being disturbed unduly by the outside world.

As with so many other elements of Maronite history, the exact chronology is unclear (maybe because the Lebanese civil war has destroyed and dispersed so many libraries), but we know that the Maronites came into contact with Westerners during the Crusades and at some point in the twelfth century the Church leaders approached the Franks and asked to be accepted into the Catholic Church. In 1182 the Crusader chronicler William of Tyre wrote that

40,000 Maronites renounced monothelitism and joined with the Crusaders, although the mountain-dwellers remained hostile to the invaders. Nevertheless despite this internal opposition, in 1213 the Maronite Patriarch Jeremiah al-Amshiti visited Rome and in 1215 received the pallium, completing the formal union.[5] In this way the Maronites became the first Near Eastern Christian denomination to embrace Rome.

After the Maronites: the evolution of the Eastern Catholic Churches

Where the Maronites led the way other groups followed, although it was several centuries before others unified with Rome. Ultimately this was to lead to the creation of a whole cluster of Eastern Catholic Churches each with a specific liturgical language and rite and poised culturally on the line between east and west. These Eastern Catholic Churches, formerly known as the Uniate Churches (this term has pejorative connotations in the manner of the labels discussed above and is no longer regarded as an acceptable term) broke away along the denominational lines of the earlier schisms so that each Eastern and Oriental Church had its corresponding Catholic counterpart. Therefore the Arabic-speaking Greek Orthodox Church had some followers secede to begin the Melkite Catholic Church, the Church of the East was the origin of the Chaldean Church, and the Syrian, Armenian, Coptic and Ethiopian Orthodox Churches were the source of the Syrian, Armenian, Coptic and Ethiopian Catholic Churches.

Liturgically, little changed for these new Churches, but the major issue was the acceptance of the supreme authority the Pope in Rome and the doctrine of the Catholic Church. In reality this meant adding a layer to the Church hierarchy as each Oriental Catholic Church retained its Patriarch as head of the flock; however instead of being an autonomous Church leader, as was the case with the Oriental Orthodox Patriarchs, the Catholic Patriarchs acted as subordinates to the Pope in Rome. The exact hierarchical implications of this are still debated as in the contemporary Syrian Catholic Church, Patriarch Musa Daoud was made a Cardinal by Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Boutros Abdel Ahad replaced him as Patriarch. This means that the Syrian Catholic laity, as well as a number of the clergy, still refer to both these leaders as 'Patriarch' today, some years after this event, as they see a Patriarch as being more important than a Cardinal and say that, once elevated to the Patriarchate, Cardinal Musa Daoud has never lost the status associated with this elevation.

Outside the Maronite Church, the oldest Eastern Catholic denomination is the Chaldean Church, which emerged as a movement in 1445 when Pope Eugenius IV first used the term with reference to a group that had split from the Church of the East and sought support in Rome. However this group first formally became a new Church denomination in 1551 when John Sulaqa was consecrated Chaldean Patriarch of Babylon in Rome.[6] The Chaldeans were

followed several centuries later by their West Syrian counterparts with the formation of the Syrian Catholic Church. Having had dealings with Rome for some centuries, in the seventeenth century in Aleppo the local Syrian Orthodox population acknowledged the authority of a Catholic Bishop named Andreas Ahijan. In 1662 he was named first Syrian Catholic Patriarch and, after some disruptions in the eighteenth century, the Syrian Catholic Patriarchate was finally instituted in 1783 in a succession that has continued until the present day.[7]

Outside the Syriac-speaking realm relationships with Rome took longer to emerge. The Melkite Catholic Church seceded from the Melkite (*Rum*) Orthodox in 1724 when Pope Benedict XIII (1724–1730) recognised Patriarch Cyril VI (1724–1759) as Melkite Patriarch in Communion with Rome after two Patriarchs were appointed by opposing factions within the Melkite Church.[8] In the Armenian case, the Armenians had been in contact with Catholics, particularly those from Venice, since the sixteenth century, owing to collaborations on printing texts in Armenian. These links led to a break-away community of monks basing themselves in Venice from the first half of the eighteenth century onwards and embracing Catholicism. Although this Mektarist Order (named for their founder Mxitʿar of Sebaste) was influential in Armenian scholarship and education, Catholicism never widely took hold amongst the wider population and Armenian Catholics are still only a small minority in Armenian communities today.

Finally the Coptic Orthodox Church came into contact with Franciscans in the seventeenth century, which gave birth to a Coptic Catholic movement, but as with the Armenians this never became a significant part of the Coptic tradition. In their daughter Church, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the brief imposition of Catholicism by colonial forces in the sixteenth century may explain why Catholicism failed to take root amongst the Christians of Ethiopia.

Colonialism and the rise of Protestantism

Protestant Churches only became known to the Christians of the Middle East in the nineteenth century when American and European missionaries from various Protestant traditions and Western (Roman) Catholicism travelled to the region to undertake missionary and social work. Through their work in founding schools and clinics, many local Christians became attracted to these alternative forms of Christianity and a variety of different churches emerged. As an example of this we can still find in Aleppo in Syria the remnants of an Anglican Community and an Armenian Protestant Church and in the Syrian desert in the town of Qaryatayn the last members of a Danish Protestant Church that was founded in the early twentieth century are finally dying out, as are their Norwegian Protestant neighbours in the nearby town of Nabk. Political and cultural changes are largely responsible for these shifts away from 'foreign' denominations and there is still distrust

of Pentecostalist and Baptist Churches and similar evangelical movements among the Middle Eastern Christian population today.

This is largely because such movements are now seen through the prism of a post-Said worldview and are perceived as the offshoots of a paternalistic, colonial policy and additionally, in a related manner, in a post-9/11 world many people in the Middle East fear being 'tainted' by association with a 'colonialist' organisation. One has only to read reports of how Iraqi Christians have been victimised due to their perceived alignment with the Western 'Crusaders' to understand how ancient forms of Christianity are viewed as being more authentically Middle Eastern than later Western variants imported from the nineteenth century onwards. As underlined in the opening paragraphs, Oriental Christians are ethnically, culturally, linguistically and generally politically aligned to their Muslim neighbours. Being fellow Christians means that they share a religion, but not necessarily any cultural attributes, with Western Christians. It must also be remembered that the issues that are currently convulsing some Western Churches, namely priestly marriage, the celibacy of homosexual clergy and the ordination of women, are issues that currently have no place in the debates of Oriental Christians.

In Middle Eastern Christian society all parish clergy, Orthodox or Catholic, have the right to marry, provided they do so before being ordained a priest and in the knowledge that only monks can aspire to the Episcopacy. Secondly attitudes to women's rights and homosexuality are still in the opening stages of debate and need several decades of discussion and social change at least before these questions become the burning issue that they currently are with Western Christians.

At the same time, whilst Western Christians congratulate themselves on their sophistication for debating such issues as gender and sexuality, for many Christians outside Western society these are seen as fringe debates, indicating that Western society has lost its way. As war displaces people throughout the region and Christians are subjected to more rigorous social controls or outright persecution, issues such as the forced imposition of the *hijab* on Christian women or attacks on Christians selling alcohol seem far more cogent issues for the Oriental Churches to debate than the sexual preferences of local priests. In short Western society is in danger of assuming that all Christians have the same concerns and worldview wherever they live on the planet, just as some people assume that all Muslims agree with the Sunni Wahabi beliefs of Saudi Arabia or the Shia Ayatollahs of Iran, or all Jews agree with the behaviour of Orthodox settlers in the Palestinian territories. Like their Muslim and Jewish counterparts, Christians embrace a whole spectrum of beliefs and Oriental Christians, whilst sharing a belief system with other Christians, have different priorities in the context of their lives as residents of the Middle East.

Conclusion

The geo-politics of the Middle East and its location as the birthplace of the three great monotheistic religions of the world all mean that this is a region that cannot be ignored. As a post-millennial panic seems to cast Islam as the global bogeyman diametrically opposed to the interests of the West in the aftermath of the fall of Soviet Communism,[9] it is increasingly urgent that myths and misunderstandings about the region are dispelled and a more balanced opinion is offered to the wider public.

It is hoped that this book, by giving a survey of the facts, figures and state of various Middle Eastern Christian denominations at the time of going to press (November 2008), will give readers a clearer insight into the reality of daily life for Christians in an increasingly unstable part of the world. It should also help us to understand how in an increasingly globalised society the actions of politicians, religious figures, business leaders and NGOs have a significant effect on the lives of people many miles away and that they should think more deeply about the wider ramifications of their actions before they speak publicly or put some of their policies into action.

Many people have said that Christianity has a particular role to play in the destiny of the Middle East coming as it does as the link between the Jews and Muslims. As a Faith based less on the concept of Law and more on unconditional Love than either of its monotheistic counterparts it perhaps has the flexibility to act as a bridge between these two Brothers (in an Abrahamic perspective). However in order for this to happen Middle Eastern Christians deserve the support of, and more importantly the respect of, their Western co-religionists in order to act in an autonomous manner and not to be viewed as tools of Western interest.

2 The Syrian Orthodox Church in the modern Middle East[1]

Sebastian Brock

The Aramaic roots of Middle Eastern Christianity

Although Christianity was born in the Middle East, and it is now widely known (thanks to Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of Christ*) that Jesus spoke Aramaic, nevertheless only very few people are aware that there has been a continuous presence in the Middle East, throughout the centuries, of Christians speaking, or using as their liturgical language, Syriac, which is just a form of Aramaic. Before the advent of Islam, and the spread of Arabic as the standard language from the seventh century AD onwards, the majority of the population of the Middle East had spoken, and/or written in, some dialect of Aramaic for well over the previous millennium; thus it is not surprising that, from an early date, Aramaic-speaking Christians should have adopted as their literary language one of these dialects (Syriac).

Today, modern dialects of Aramaic are only spoken in rather outlying regions, but the fact that its speakers include Muslims, Jews, and Mandaeans, as well as Christians, points to the former importance of Aramaic as the main language of the Middle East before it was replaced by Arabic. However, as a liturgical language Syriac is retained to this day in the various Churches of Syriac liturgical tradition, the Syrian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic, Maronite, the Church of the East,[2] and the Chaldean Catholic Church. Even though in many places Syriac has nowadays been replaced by Arabic in the Liturgy, it tends still to be used for the most solemn portions of the services. Christians from these different Churches of Syriac liturgical tradition are to be found in almost all the countries of the Middle East, but most notably in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey.

The different Syriac Churches

As any visitor to the Middle East will soon discover, there are today a large number of different Churches present: besides the more familiar Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches, there are also the Oriental Orthodox Churches, the Church of the East, and various Eastern Rite Catholic Churches. To explain how this state of affairs has come about,

one needs to go back long before the divisions between the Orthodox and the Catholic Churches (in the Middle Ages), and between the Catholic and the Protestant Churches (at the Reformation).

In the fifth and sixth century there had been a major doctrinal controversy over the Definition of Faith issued at the Council of Chalcedon in 451; this aimed at defining the relationship between the humanity and the divinity in the incarnate Christ. The Council of Chalcedon in due course came to be regarded as normative in the Byzantine Empire, and so today the Council's Definition of Faith is the one officially accepted by all the Eastern Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant Churches. In the fifth and sixth century, however, many in the Eastern Roman Empire, and in the Persian Empire further east, disliked the wording of the Chalcedonian Definition of Faith, considering it to be very unsatisfactory, given their particular understanding of the technical terms, in particular 'nature' and 'hypostasis', which were employed: on their understanding of these terms, the Council's Definition of Faith sounded either illogical or even distinctly heretical. When the Arab conquests of the Middle East took place in the seventh century, these 'non-Chalcedonians' were cut off politically from the 'Chalcedonian' Byzantine Empire; as a result the non-Chalcedonian Churches of the Middle East have remained largely forgotten over the centuries by the rest of the Christian Churches. Furthermore, because of their non-acceptance of the Chalcedonian Definition of Faith, they have often in the past been regarded as heretical by the Chalcedonian Churches. It has only been in recent years, when ecumenical dialogue has taken place, that theologians on all sides have concluded that, underlying the verbal conflicts between the doctrinal formulations of the different Churches, there is an underlying common understanding of the mystery of the Incarnation.[3]

The Churches of Syriac liturgical tradition fall into three groups, two of which do not accept the Council of Chalcedon, namely the Church of the East, on the one hand, and the Syrian Orthodox Church on the other, the latter having the same doctrinal position as the Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Churches (collectively being known as the Oriental Orthodox Churches).[4] The third group, those that accept the Council of Chalcedon, consists of the Maronite Church, and the Eastern Rite Catholic counterparts of the two other Syriac Churches, the Syrian Catholic Church (which goes back to the late eighteenth century),[5] and the Chaldean Catholic Church (which goes back to the mid sixteenth century). To these one could add the Byzantine, or Rum Orthodox Patriarcate of Antioch, in which Syriac was still a liturgical language in some areas until the early seventeenth century (although the liturgical rite had been conformed to the Byzantine usage in the early Middle Ages).

Misleading misnomers

Because the non-Chalcedonian Churches were often considered 'heretical' by the Chalcedonian Churches, they have been given various opprobrious

names; these, however, should today always be avoided. Thus the Syrian Orthodox, along with the other Oriental Orthodox Churches, has usually been described as 'Monophysite', which can be seriously misleading ('Miaphysite', however, would be an acceptable descriptive term, i.e. holders of a one-nature christology, as opposed the Chalcedonian 'Dyophysite', or two-nature christology). Another term often used in the past was 'Jacobite' (after Jacob Baradaeus, an active opponent of the Council of Chalcedon in the sixth century). The Church of the East, on the other hand, has been traditionally described by the other Churches as 'Nestorian', after Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople who was deposed at the Council of Ephesus in 431; this too is highly misleading and it has given rise to a great deal of confusion and misunderstanding, seeing that the different parties have very different understandings of what position 'Nestorius' represents.[6]

A rich literary and artistic heritage

All the different Syriac Churches today can share the two great fourth-century Syriac writers, Aphrahat and Ephrem, who belong to the period before the ecclesiastical divisions that commenced in the mid-fifth century and continue to the present day. As a poet who is also a profound theologian, Ephrem is a particularly important figure, and much of his teaching remains of considerable relevance, not least in the context of the ecological crisis.[7] Although Jacob of Serugh, another great poet (d. 521), lived in the midst of the christological controversies of his time, his eirenic approach resulted in his ending up being recognised as a saint in both the Syrian Orthodox and the Maronite Church, and short excerpts from his poetry still regularly feature in the liturgical services of these two Churches.

Syrian Orthodox scholars played a very important role, especially in the seventh century, in the transmission of Greek philosophical learning to the Middle East. Then, in the late eighth, and the ninth century, scholars of all the Syriac Churches were involved in the famous 'translation movement', sponsored by the Abbasid Caliphs, during which an enormous number of Greek philosophical, medical and scientific works, were translated into Arabic.[8] In the earlier stages of the translation movement the translations were made first from Greek into Syriac, and only then from Syriac into Arabic. The reason for this seemingly cumbersome procedure was purely practical: there had been a long tradition of translating technical Greek texts into Syriac, but none yet into Arabic; thus it was much easier at first to proceed first from Greek into Syriac, and then from one Semitic language into another. Only later on was the ability acquired to translate directly from Greek into Arabic. In this way the Syriac Churches contributed to the intellectual heritage of the Islamic world, which in turn was to influence the medieval western world, through the translations into Latin of the great Arab philosophers and commentators on Aristotle.

The impression is sometimes given that Syriac literature more or less came

to an end in the early fourteenth century; this is completely false, for in fact Syriac has continued to function as an important literary language right up to the present day,[9] and modern cultural magazines, especially those produced by the diaspora communities, will often have contributions written in Classical Syriac, alongside others in a variety of different languages. As will be discussed below, the advent of computer printing of Syriac has opened up many new possibilities in the area of publishing in the different Syriac scripts.

Although there is no single distinctive Syrian Orthodox architectural or artistic tradition, such as one finds with the other Oriental Orthodox Churches, there are a good number of very fine examples that have escaped the destruction and warfare that has plagued the Middle East over the centuries. Some notable buildings are mentioned below, in the section on monasteries. In recent years a number of medieval wall paintings in Syria have come to light, indicating a lively artistic tradition that had hitherto been little known. In the area of manuscript illustration the finest productions are to be found in a series of magnificent Gospel Lectionaries of the late twelfth and the thirteenth centuries.[10]

A traumatic history in the twentieth century

At the beginning of the twentieth century there was a very sizeable presence of Christians of the various indigenous Churches in several provinces of the Ottoman Empire. This applied in particular to certain parts of eastern Anatolia where, for example in the Vilayet of Diyarbekir during the period 1885–1914 between one-fifth and one-quarter of the population was Christian,[11] whereas today in the same area there remains only a very small presence. This major demographic change is due to two factors – the large-scale massacres that took place in that region during the First World War, and the constant drain of emigration that has been taking place above all in the course of the last half century or so.[12]

Although it was primarily the Armenians who were the victims of the massacres and deportations, Christians of the different Syriac Churches in eastern Anatolia in very many cases suffered equally, and 1915 has come to be known as 'the year of the sword' (Sayfo). The massive scale of the killings is only now becoming more widely known.[13] As far as the Syrian Orthodox were concerned, it is estimated that they lost about a third of their population in the area, and as a result eight out of the twenty dioceses at that time were completely wiped out and ceased to exist. Large numbers of those who escaped massacre fled south, and eventually settled in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan (in particular, Bethlehem). Others went even further afield, ending up in both North and South America, where there are now sizeable Syrian Orthodox communities in certain localities. The same, on a lesser scale numerically, also applies to the Syrian Catholics.[14]

This first wave of emigration of Syrian Orthodox from what is now eastern

Turkey was followed by a series of further emigrations from different parts of the Middle East, beginning around the middle of the century, with the creation of the State of Israel. Among those who ended up in North America was the Syrian Orthodox bishop in Jerusalem, Mar Athanasius Samuel (d. 1995), who is best known outside the Syrian Orthodox Church as the man who, recognizing their interest, first purchased some of the famous Dead Sea Scrolls.[15] In the late 1960s Germany, being in need of foreign workers, reached an accord with the Turkish Government that resulted in a large number of Turkish nationals, including some young Syrian Orthodox from eastern Turkey, going to Germany as Gastarbeiters. In due course, due to the depressed economic situation in eastern Turkey, and later on, due to the insecurity caused by the fighting between Kurdish insurgents and the Turkish Army (when each side was apt to see the Syrian Orthodox as collaborating with the other), whole families emigrated, not only to Germany, but also to Sweden and the Netherlands. For many Istanbul was a staging post, and this city soon acquired a sizeable Syrian Orthodox population of its own, which led to the creation of a new Patriarchal Vicariate in 1986. The rapid growth of the diaspora in western Europe can be seen from the figures given by the late Syrian Orthodox Metropolitan of Central Europe, Mar Julius Çiçek (d. 2005): whereas in 1977 there were about 20,000 (mainly in Germany and Sweden), by 2003 there were c. 150,000, the largest numbers being in Sweden, Germany, and the Netherlands, with much smaller communities in Belgium, France, Switzerland and Austria.[16] The vast majority of these originate from Tur ʿAbdin, in south-eastern Turkey.

Political turmoil in other parts of the Middle East led to yet further waves of emigration: thus in particular the Lebanese Civil War, the Iraq–Iran War, the Gulf War, and the American and British invasion of Iraq in 2003, have all resulted in massive population displacements, often ending up for the more fortunate in emigration to more peaceful parts of the world. The emigration of Christians from Iraq, among whom will be many Syrian Orthodox and Syrian Catholics alongside Chaldeans and Assyrians, has been on a particularly large scale in the aftermath of the invasion.[17] It is probably true to say that there are far more members of all the Middle Eastern Churches now living in the diaspora than those who remain in the Middle East.

One of the problems highlighted by emigration to western countries concerns identity in a modern secular society. Whereas in the Middle East it is primarily religious identity that is of importance, in western society it is ethnicity. How then should the Syrian Orthodox describe themselves in the West? The element 'Syrian' in Syrian Orthodox, which goes back to long before the creation of the modern state of Syria, is now a source of confusion, above all for those who come from Turkey or Iraq. The question of nomenclature has been, and remains, the source of divisiveness.[18]

Organisation

The head of the Syrian Orthodox Church has the title Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, and is currently resident in Damascus. All the Patriarchs since the Middle Ages take the throne name of Ignatius, after St Ignatius of Antioch. Antioch was one of the five great patriarchates that developed in the early centuries of the Church, the others being Alexandria, Constantinople, Jerusalem and Rome. Today there are five Patriarchs of Antioch, the other four being the Maronite, Syrian Catholic, Rum (Byzantine) Orthodox and Melkite (Byzantine Catholic). From the Middle Ages until 1933 the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchs resided in the ancient monastery known as the 'Saffron Monastery' (Deir az-Zaʿfaran) near Mardin, in southeast Turkey, and before moving to Damascus in 1959 they were resident in Homs.

Within the Middle East there are Archdioceses or Patriarchal Vicariates in five different countries: in Syria itself, these are of Damascus, Aleppo, Homs and Hama (based in Homs), and the Jazireh and the Euphrates (based in Hasseke). To the north, in Turkey there are the ancient archdioceses of Mardin and Tur ʿAbdin, and a more recent Patriarchal Vicariate in Istanbul, established to meet the needs of the large Syrian Orthodox population of that city which has grown up in the last four decades. In 2006 a further Patriarchal Vicariate of Adiyaman and Kharput was established, covering an area that before 1915 had had a strong Syrian Orthodox presence. In Iraq there are archdioceses of Baghdad and Basra, of Mosul, and of the Monastery of Mar Mattai. Jordan and Israel are served by the Archdiocese of Jerusalem and Jordan, based on the Monastery of St Mark, in the Old City. For Lebanon there are three archdioceses, of Beirut, of Zahle, and of Mount Lebanon.

The Syrian Orthodox Church is today a worldwide Church, and archdioceses, or more often, Patriarchal Vicariates, are to be found in many countries outside the Middle East. In south India the Syrian Orthodox presence goes back to the seventeenth century, and today the Syrian Orthodox community there is the largest in the world, with twelve dioceses under a Catholicos.[19] Much more recent, and usually only going back a few decades, are the archdioceses or Patriarchal Vicariates in Europe, North and South America, and Australia.

The Syrian Catholic Church has its Patriarchate in Beirut (at present vacant), with bishoprics in Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Hasseke, Baghdad, Mosul, Cairo, and outside the Middle East, in Newark (New Jersey). In Istanbul there is a Patriarchal Exarch and in Rome a Patriarchal Procurator. In India the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church came into existence in 1930, and since 2005 it has as its head its own Catholicos.

Monasticism and monasteries

Monasteries have always played a very important role in the history of the Syrian Orthodox Church, and it is significant that the first metropolitan

of Central Europe, Mar Julius Çiçek, founded no fewer than three monasteries in Western Europe, to serve as spiritual centres for the newly settled Syrian Orthodox: the first of these to be consecrated was the Monastery of St Ephrem (1984), near Hengelo in the Netherlands, to be followed by that of St Augen (1999), in Switzerland, and St Jacob of Serugh in Warburg, Germany (2000). In the sixth and seventh centuries there were literally hundreds of monasteries, often quite small, scattered over the Middle East, though most were concentrated in what is today eastern Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq. As in Western Europe, many monasteries served as important cultural centres, and it is largely thanks to them that the works of the great Syriac authors are preserved – writers such as Ephrem (d. 373), Jacob of Serugh (d. 521), Philoxenus (d. 523), Isaac of Nineveh (late seventh century), and many others, culminating in the polymath Bar ʿEbroyo (Barhebraeus, d. 1286), who was an almost exact contemporary of Thomas Aquinas.

In the Middle Ages a particularly important monastery, as far as the transmission of Syriac literature is concerned, was the 'Syrian Monastery' (Deir al-Surian), between Alexandria and Cairo, today a flourishing Coptic Orthodox monastery. In the Middle Ages it had both Syrian and Coptic Orthodox monks, and one of its abbots in the early tenth century, Mushe of Nisibis, besides beautifying the church, collected a large number of ancient Syriac manuscripts, many of which today form part of the Vatican and British Library collections, having been acquired in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; several important manuscripts, however, still remain in the monastery. In the twelfth century, when the Patriarch Michael the Great wanted to renew his own monastery library after a fire (in the Monastery of Barsaumo, today ruined, near Malatya in Turkey), he sent to Egypt to borrow a hundred or so manuscripts from this monastery.

Several ancient monasteries have remained in continuous, or almost continuous, use over the centuries, right up to the present day. This applies to two famous monasteries in southeastern Turkey, Deir al-Zaʿfaran, the former seat of the Patriarchate, and Mar (means 'Saint') Gabriel Monastery, further east in the region known as Tur ʿAbdin, 'the mountain of the servants (of God)'.[20] In the last half century the Monastery of Mar Gabriel, founded in AD 397, has played a particularly important role through its school; this provides young men who are well trained in the Syriac language and in the liturgical tradition and its orally transmitted music; some continue, to be ordained as priests and/or monks, while many others go on to teach in church schools, not only in Turkey but also in the European diaspora.

A few other small monasteries in Tur ʿAbdin also continue to function as such, notably the Monasteries of Mar Melke and Mar Jacob the Recluse (in Salah). Some of the Syrian Orthodox monasteries in former use on the south escarpment of the mountainous plateau of Tur ʿAbdin were originally foundations made by monks of the Church of the East.

The most famous of these was the monastery of Mar Abraham of Kashkar, also known as the Great Monastery. Abraham was a monk who revived

monastic life in the Church of the East in the mid sixth century. This revival not only led to a huge number of new monastic foundations in the course of the next century or so, but also to the production of a remarkable body of literature on the spiritual life, the most famous author being the hermit Isaac of Niniveh (also known as Isaac the Syrian). These monastic works soon crossed the ecclesiastical boundaries of the time, and many of Isaac's writings were then translated into Greek at the famous Greek Orthodox monastery of St Saba, south of Jerusalem.[21] It so happens that many of these profound monastic writings came to be transmitted by Syrian Orthodox monks in Syriac, and one can conjecture that this may partly have been brought about by the change of ownership of some of these monasteries overlooking the Mesopotamian plain.

An ancient monastery that has continued to function right up to the present day is that of Mar Mattai, not far from Mosul, in Iraq. Situated on the side of a mountain, it commands a marvellous view out over the plain below. Extensive recent restorations make the monastery look as if it was new, but in fact it goes back to at least the sixth century. In the Middle Ages it served as a very important cultural centre for the Syrian Orthodox Church, as we learn from various sources. In the correspondence of Timothy I, the Patriarch of the Church of the East at the beginning of the ninth century, the monastery is mentioned several times as the place where manuscripts of rare works of the Church Fathers were preserved: on several occasions Timothy asked his correspondent to try and borrow one of these, without letting on that it was the Patriarch of a rival Church who wanted to have it copied! In the thirteenth century the monastery evidently had artists working at it, for one of the illustrated manuscripts produced there still survives, now in the Vatican Library. Located in this monastery is the tomb of the greatest ever scholar of the Syrian Orthodox Church, Bar ʿEbroyo (Bar Hebraeus), who died in 1286.

A second famous monastery in Iraq is that of Mar Behnam, to the south of Mosul. This gem of thirteenth-century architecture was formerly Syrian Orthodox, but today it belongs to the Syrian Catholic Church. Although the recent restoration is rather too dominating, the extensive and beautifully carved medieval inscriptions around the doors and elsewhere remain a source of delight.

The oldest functioning monastery in Syria is also under Syrian Catholic jurisdiction. The Monastery of Mar Musa, near Nebek (to the north of Damascus), had been unoccupied for more than a century when the present abbot, Fr. Paolo dall'Oglio, restored and revived it in recent years. The monastery's church has some of the best-preserved medieval wall-paintings to survive in Syria. Despite being (at least until recently) quite difficult of access, the monastery, with its small but flourishing community, attracts many visitors. Another important Syrian Catholic monastery is that of Sharfet (Charfet) in Lebanon, formerly the seat of the Syrian Catholic Patriarch.

Two important Syrian Orthodox monasteries in Syria are both recent foundations. The first to be built and consecrated (in 1996) is dedicated to

St Ephrem, and is located to the north of Damascus, at Maʿarat Saidnaya. The monastery also functions as a Seminary, as well as the residence of the Patriarch when he is not in Damascus. The other recently built monastery is located in the east of Syria, in Tel Wardiyat, a little way west of Hasseke; dedicated to Mary, Bearer of God (*Yoldat Aloho*), and consecrated in 2000, it is attractively built using architectural features characteristic of Tur ʿAbdin (which has a long tradition of very fine stone-masons).[22]

According to tradition, the Monastery of St Mark in Jerusalem is on the site of the Upper Room of the Last Supper; an inscription of medieval date describes it as being the house of Mary, mother of John Mark. The Monastery's church houses one of the various icons of the Virgin Mary that are traditionally said to have been painted by St Luke. Even though the Syrian Orthodox community in Jerusalem has always been small (and has become even smaller owing to emigration in the last half century or so), there has always been a steady flow of pilgrims, several of whom in the Middle Ages scratched their names on the stone columns at the entrance to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Throughout most of the history of the Syrian Orthodox Church there have also been monastic communities for women, although sometimes there have been breaks in this tradition owing to the dangers caused by external conditions. Thus the last nun for a long time in Tur ʿAbdin can be seen in a photograph taken a little before the First World War by Gertrude Bell.[23] The traumatic experience of 'Sayfo' brought on one such temporary break which was to last until the early 1960s, when a small group of young women, whose families intended that they should emigrate to Europe for safety, decided they wanted to try out their monastic vocation at the Monastery of Mar Gabriel in Tur ʿAbdin.[24] Today there are over a dozen Sisters living in the monastery complex. In recent years communities of Sisters have also started up in Syria (attached to the Patriarchal Seminary at Maʿaret Saidnaya) and in Lebanon (at Atshaneh); several of these Sisters are well educated, with university degrees.

Demography/locations

Just in the course of the last century there have been enormous changes in the demography of the Syrian Orthodox in the Middle East.[25] Before the First World War there were sizable communities in towns of Eastern Anatolia such as Urfa (ancient Edessa, the seat of King Abgar who, according to a tradition first recorded by Eusebius, corresponded with Jesus), Adana, Kharput, Diyabekir, as well as in many villages of Besheriyeh, to the north of the Tigris. Apart from diminutive remnants in Kharput and Diyabakir these have all disappeared. Although Mardin and the villages of Tur ʿAbdin also suffered badly during 'Sayfo', a significant Syrian Orthodox presence was still maintained. Many of those who escaped the massacres fled south to towns in what is now Syria, Lebanon and the West Bank (Bethlehem). It was not, however, until the late 1960s and the following decades that Tur ʿAbdin suffered its

greatest losses, this time through emigration, first as Gastarbeiters to Germany, and then, as victims caught between the Kurdish insurgency and the Turkish army, claiming asylum as refugees. Within the space of only a few decades the large majority of the Syrian Orthodox population had left Tur ʿAbdin either for Istanbul, or for countries in Western Europe, notably Germany and Sweden.[26] In very recent years, the situation of the Syrian Orthodox minority has improved to a certain extent with the possibility of Turkey becoming a member of the European Union; a small number of families are returning, and a few villages are being rebuilt (notably Kafro Tahtayto and Marbobo).

In Syria the Syrian Orthodox and Syrian Catholic tended to be concentrated on the larger towns, Aleppo, Homs, and (to a lesser extent) Damascus, though there were a number of large villages to the south east of Homs that had remained Syrian Orthodox over the centuries; prominent among these was Sadad, which today is virtually the only one that remains predominantly Syrian Orthodox, the others having been depleted by emigration (mostly to the United States). The Syrian Orthodox community in Aleppo was considerably strengthened in 1924 when what remained of the community in Urfa moved en masse to Aleppo, founding their own church (of St George) there. Refugees from Tur ʿAbdin and further north also settled in the new town of Qamishli, just across the modern Turkish border, and this town has become something of a focus of Syriac culture, hosting an annual Festival of the Syriac Language.[27]

In the sixteenth century the Syrian Orthodox had been quite a strong presence in several villages in northern Lebanon, but their presence today in Beirut, Zahle and elsewhere is largely the consequence of the flow of refugees from 'Sayfo'; the same applies very largely to the situation in today's Israel, the West Bank and Jordan, in all of which the Syrian Orthodox presence is very small.

For the first half of the twentieth century the Syrian Orthodox presence in Iraq was focused on Mosul and a considerable number of villages in the north, east of the Tigris, notably Bartelli, Qaraqosh (largely Syrian Catholic), Baʿshiqa and Bahzani. More recently the situation has changed radically due to a number of different reasons. First, with Saddam Hussein's attempt to Arabize the north of Iraq in the course of his conflict with the Kurds, large numbers of the local populace were forcibly resettled elsewhere and in many cases their villages were razed to the ground. As far as the Christian villages were concerned, most of their people were moved to Baghdad, which for a while had one of the largest Christian populations of any Middle Eastern city, and in 1962 the Syrian Orthodox archdiocese of Baghdad was revived.

The misery of the Iraq–Iran war (1980–1988) and then of the United Nations sanctions, following Saddam Hussein's short-lived seizure of Kuwait (1990), led to the large-scale emigration of those who had the means to leave. For those who remained worse was to come in the aftermath of the American and British invasion of Iraq in 2003. In the lawlessness that ensued, the Syrian Orthodox, along with the other Christian communities, were forced

out of certain districts of Baghdad by Islamic militias, and large numbers fled north to the safer Kurdish area. Mosul, once a thriving Syrian Orthodox stronghold, likewise became a city whose Christian population now live in fear. Among the clergy and people who in recent years have been kidnapped and killed are quite a number of Syrian Orthodox. This disastrous state of affairs in Iraq has not surprisingly led to further large-scale flight, largely to Syria and Jordan, where the proportion of Christian refugees far exceeds the proportion of Christians to Muslims within the total population of Iraq.

It will come to many as a surprise that in 1997 a Syrian Orthodox church was consecrated in Sharjah, on the Gulf. Syriac Christianity had been an important presence on the west coast of the Gulf, especially in the seventh century when Beth Qatraye (roughly modern Qatar) produced several famous Syriac writers, most notably Isaac 'the Syrian', whose writings on spiritual life have been translated in recent years into languages as far apart as Catalan and Japanese. Syriac Christianity seems to have disappeared from the Gulf area around the ninth or tenth century, and it has only been in recent decades that it has reappeared there, with the presence of large numbers of migrant workers from various of the Syriac Churches of Kerala, in south India.

Publishing

The vast majority of the Church's publications in the Middle East are, for obvious reasons, in Arabic; this applies, for example, to the Patriarchal Magazine, and to the excellent series entitled 'Syriac Patrimony',[28] edited by Mar Gregorius Yuhanna Ibrahim, Metropolitan of Aleppo. The last three Syrian Orthodox Patriarchs have all been noted authors in Arabic; in particular Afrem Barsoum (1933–1957) was the author of a standard history of Syriac literature, now translated into English.[29] For a short period in the middle of the twentieth century Mar Filoksinos Dolabani, Metropolitan of Mardin (1947–1969), was able to publish a number of books in Syriac in the archdiocese of Mardin, but subsequently this activity became impossible in Turkey. The only Middle Eastern country where Syriac books could freely be published was Lebanon, though for a period after 1972 there were limited possibilities in Iraq.[30] Amongst other things, this meant that most Syriac liturgical books continued to be copied by hand.

In recent decades, however, two major changes have occurred, in the first place, a new situation had been created by the new presence of large Syrian Orthodox communities now living in western countries: now, for the first time there was freedom to publish. At first publications in Syriac were simply reproduced from handwriting: this applies to the earlier publications of the Monastery of St Ephrem in the Netherlands; many of these are in the calligraphic hand of Mar Julius Çiçek himself. The second major change came in the late 1980s with the new possibility of printing Syriac by computer. The extent to which these new opportunities have been seized in the Diaspora, especially in Europe, can readily be seen from the large number of multilingual

cultural magazines, in most of which Syriac, either Classical or Modern, features. Freedom of publication in the West has also meant that for the first time it has become possible to publish Syriac narratives about the massacres of 1915; some of these have now also been translated into European languages.[31]

Already in the first half of the twentieth century a movement had grown up to produce secular literature in Syriac once again, resulting in the translation of several classics of Western European literature, for the most part published in Beirut.[32] The production of secular literature, in both prose and poetry, has continued in the European diaspora, especially in Sweden where, for the first time, writing in the spoken dialect of Tur ʿAbdin, known as Turoyo, has also been pioneered.

Although writing in the north-eastern dialects of Modern Aramaic goes back several centuries, and had been promoted by American missionaries working in Urmiah in the nineteenth century, Turoyo had hitherto only been written down for the benefit of western scholars. In Qamishli in the 1960s Danho Dahho and others began to promote the use of Turoyo in a musical setting, thus creating the birth of an indigenous literature in Turoyo. This was followed when, in Sweden in the early 1980s, the Swedish Government commissioned Yusuf Ishaq, who had been trained in linguistics, to devise a system for representing Turoyo in western script.[33] Although not always accepted by the community, this has served as the vehicle especially for children's books and short story writing.

Conclusion

At the beginning of the twenty-first century all the Middle Eastern Churches are faced with enormous challenges: their very existence in their ancestral homelands is threatened, while the very large numbers of their members whom circumstances have forced to emigrate, find themselves having to adapt to a new life in a western society that is not only deeply secularised but also very largely unconcerned with their plight.

On the other hand there are some signs of hope for the future. Thus, half a century or so ago, there was the serious possibility that the monastic life in the Syrian Orthodox Church was on the verge of disappearing, a dire situation in view of the fact that its bishops are drawn from the monasteries. Today, however, there are good indications that the monastic life is reviving, thus assuring a supply of bishops for the future. Furthermore, for the diaspora communities, many new possibilities are opened up, above all in the fields of education and publishing. Conversely, for the Western Churches in the host countries, there is the opportunity for the first time to come into direct contact with, and learn from the experience of, the different Syriac Churches with their own rich and distinctive history and spiritual heritage.

3 The Maronites in Lebanon

An historical and political perspective

Fiona McCallum

Introduction

The Maronites have long enjoyed a unique position in the Middle East. They are the only Christian group in the region to have enjoyed widespread autonomy throughout centuries of Islamic rule. This freedom culminated in the formation of an independent Lebanese state where Christians enjoyed supremacy, including being the only Arab country with a non-Muslim head of state. Although population figures in Lebanon are disputed (mostly due to political sensitivities), it is estimated that the Maronites are now the third largest community (22 per cent), behind the Shiites (30 per cent) and Sunnis (27 per cent). This marks a steady decline from the last known official data (the 1932 census) when 28.7 per cent were Maronite and Christians totalled 51.3 per cent of the population.[1] The Maronite community has also enjoyed substantial growth in the diaspora, estimated at 4–5 million.

The Maronite Church continues to play an important role in preserving the identity of the community and has often sought to represent the interests of its members. Its historical connections with Western powers helped to ensure that the Maronites escaped the discrimination associated with the *dhimmi* system.[2] Yet, this has proved a double-edged sword as the Maronites have struggled to reconcile their past as the dominant group in the Lebanese republic not just with the demands of other communities but also with the regional environment, which is strongly characterised by another religion – Islam. This article examines both the church and the wider community in order to illustrate the close relationship between the two. The present situation of the Maronites will be traced from their historical origins, focusing on key events that allowed the community to prosper. The adverse impact of the civil war will be analysed to demonstrate both the challenges facing the community in the continuously unstable Middle East region in the twenty-first century, and the response undertaken by political actors, including most notably the Maronite Church.

The origins of the Maronites

The present Maronite Church traces its origins to a monastic community named after a fourth-century hermit Maron who resided in Syria. According to church historians, the monks of Beit Maroon adhered to the teachings of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, which defined that Christ possessed two natures – divine and human – that were joined in one person.[3] This doctrine was rejected by many other Christian groups in the surrounding area. Thus, the monks became frequent victims of violence including an attack by followers of Patriarch Severus of Antioch that left 350 monks dead in 517.[4]

During the sixth century, it appeared that the monks also lost Byzantine protection. In the past, this has been ascribed to their adoption of the compromise doctrine of monotheletism, which was condemned in 681.[5] This controversial view is fiercely refuted by the church today, which maintains that it is the only Eastern Catholic church to have continually remained loyal to Chalcedon. They argue that the community had no choice but to appoint a new patriarch without permission from the universal church. The Arab conquest cut off the community from Constantinople and deprived them of spiritual leadership. The last Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch to reside in the see died in 609.

Isolated and in desperate need of leadership, the community appointed a bishop as their leader in the late seventh century. John Maron is regarded not only as the first Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and All The East, but also as the founder of the modern Maronite church. He was praised for uniting the community and ensuring that a decisive battle against the Byzantine army was won. The establishment of an autonomous hierarchical structure also allowed the monastic community to evolve into an established church.[6] Even at this early stage, the Maronite patriarch was already identified as both a spiritual and temporal, even military, leader.

Ongoing conflict between different groups encouraged successive periods of emigration to the remote and isolated territory of Mount Lebanon. Here, the Maronites were able to develop their own autonomous church, as the pro-Chalcedonian church had minimal influence in the region and Muslim rulers had little interest in the group. Around 745, Caliph Marwan II recognised the Maronites as a distinct religious community.[7] According to Salibi, in this environment, the community began to resemble a *shāb* (people) as the patriarch functioned not just as the spiritual head of a church but also as a tribal chief.[8] The Maronites developed a strong attachment to the territory of Mount Lebanon, regarding it both as a spiritual homeland and as a refuge from the oppressive policies pursued by Islamic rulers elsewhere in the Arab world. They remained isolated from wider developments in the universal church until the arrival of the Crusaders in the late eleventh century. The community was mostly supportive of the new rulers and many offered their services as guides. Yet, the newcomers were unconvinced about the doctrinal beliefs of their allies and installed their own Latin hierarchy.

Although the Crusader kingdoms proved short-lived, the Maronites retained their links with the church in Rome even once Muslim rule was reinstalled. The Maronites placed themselves under Roman jurisdiction in 1182 and proclaimed an official reunion with Rome in 1203.[9] A gradual Latinization policy was encouraged by Rome including the founding of the Maronite College in 1584.[10]

The structure of the Maronite Church

As illustrated above, the Maronite Church is a patriarchal church. The patriarch is elected by the Maronite bishops and is recognised as the leader of the church and community. Only the pope, who is acknowledged as the Supreme Head of the universal Catholic Church, is awarded a higher position.

This means that the Vatican is intricately involved in church affairs including patriarchal elections.[11] Yet in recent years, particularly since the Vatican II Council (1962–1965), the church has been eager to illustrate that close ties with Rome do not have to be at the expense of the unique Maronite identity as in the past.[12] The 1990 Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium (CCEO) continues this trend of emphasising the importance of preserving the heritage of the Eastern Catholic churches.[13] The Vatican has commended the Eastern Catholic Churches for maintaining the traditions of the ancient church, which it believes can help the universal church retain crucial links to its past. For example, while Syriac has not been used as an everyday language since the fifteenth century, it is still an integral part of the Maronite liturgy.[14]

As the head of the church, the patriarch is assisted in administering church affairs by the Synod of Bishops. The Synod enjoys legislative and judicial power and holds elections to select new bishops as well as the next patriarch. However, the authority of the patriarch and Synod is limited to the patriarchal territory, which is recognised as covering Lebanon, Cyprus and other parts of the Middle East. Outside this area, bishops ministering to Maronite diaspora communities are appointed by the Vatican. While there has been a significant increase in co-ordination between the Maronite Church in Lebanon and the congregations abroad, this still affects the ability of the patriarch to care for the entire community regardless of their location.[15]

The church has enjoyed global expansion as a consequence of significant immigration, including the founding of two dioceses in the United States (1966, 1994) and one each in Brazil (1962), Australia (1973), Canada (1982), Argentina (1993), Europe (1993) and Mexico (1995). Similar to other branches of the Catholic Church, the Maronite monastic orders are also an important element of the church. The Antonin Maronite Order (created in 1695) is involved in educational and social activities including the founding of the University of the Holy Spirit at Kaslik (USEK). As will be seen shortly, the monks, like the church hierarchy, have often interpreted their vocation as including the right to take an interest in political developments in Lebanon.

The Maronites in Mount Lebanon

With the establishment of Ottoman authority in the Arab world in the sixteenth century, the Maronites began to utilise their ties with Western powers in order to ensure protection against the implementation of the *dhimmi* system. Several factors enabled the Maronites to continue to escape conditions that were common for other Christians. Firstly, the remoteness of Mount Lebanon and its apparent lack of strategic importance meant that the Ottomans rarely enforced direct rule but instead allowed the Druze emirs to exercise authority. The Druze were accustomed to the Maronite presence and tended to regard them as a fellow tribal group.

Secondly, the Maronites, especially through the head of the church, enjoyed significant influence with powerful European actors. This was partly achieved by the use of capitulations – treaties between a Western country and the Ottoman Empire that secured special rights for European residents and indigenous employees (who were predominantly Christian).[16]

However, the unique strength of the Maronites was their ability not just to secure protection from the West but also to provide a positive service to the Druze emirs. For example, Patriarch Yuhanna Makhluf was an official advisor to the early seventeenth-century Emir Fakhr al-Din II (one of the founding fathers of modern Lebanon), and ensured that the emir entered an anti-Ottoman alliance with the Grand Duchy of Tuscany.[17] As Phares suggests, such arrangements suited both parties. The emirs prospered from the intellectual skills and trading talents of the Maronites, while the Christians gained political protection, autonomy and a local ally against the ever present threat of direct Ottoman rule.[18]

Economic opportunities also encouraged Maronites to migrate to southern Mount Lebanon. The feudal system that developed in Mount Lebanon meant that leading families in each community were responsible for tax collection and in return, enjoyed substantial local power through their influence with the emir.[19] The rise of the al-Khazens had an adverse effect on the previously pre-eminent leadership role of the patriarch. According to van Leeuwen, through the patronage of this leading family, the church prospered as they used their relationship with the emir to protect it from outside intervention. However, this was at the expense of interference with clerical appointments, administration and the monasteries.[20] This uneven relationship was maintained for over two centuries, illustrating that the patriarch was no longer the sole tribal chief but instead dependent on other members of the community.

By the nineteenth century, the feudal system was disintegrating. The collapse of the emirate in 1840 after the exile of Bashir al-Shihabi II left a political vacuum, which the Ottoman authorities tried to fill.[21] However, constant interest in averting direct Ottoman rule led the European powers to use clashes between the Maronites and Druze in 1840–1841 as a legitimate reason for imposing a new governing system in Mount Lebanon termed the double kaymakamate. The area was divided into two administrative districts

with a Maronite governor in the North and a Druze governor in the South, illustrating that even at this stage, political solutions in Lebanon involved an element of political confessionalism.[22]

Furthermore, the patriarchy of Boulos Masaad reawakened the internal rivalry within the community as this leader represented the new generation of Maronite priests who came from peasant families and were working towards the replacement of the feudal system with the re-establishment of church temporal authority.[23] The church hierarchy encouraged agrarian revolts in 1858 against the landowners in the Maronite north.

However, when this was replicated in the south, Druze landlords perceived this as provocative and as a religious rather than class conflict. According to Frankel, the church stance was 'tantamount to open revolt against the legitimate and traditional authority'.[24] The 1860 Maronite–Druze clash left 12,000 killed, 4,000 dead from disease of starvation and over one million homeless over a four-week period.[25] It also had a long-lasting impact on the Maronite consciousness. According to Hanf, 'It was, above all, the fear of a repetition of these events that encouraged the Christian communities increasingly to look to the European powers for support'.[26] In 1861, Mount Lebanon became an autonomous area with a non-Maronite Christian governor and an administrative council. In 1864, this system became known as the *mutasarrifiya*. Although Mount Lebanon was still nominally part of the Ottoman Empire, it was now under French protection. Consequently, the Maronites had attained a governing system unlike any other experienced by Christians in the Middle East, reinforcing their sense of uniqueness and continuing to avoid any suggestion of *dhimmi* status.

The establishment of the *mutasarrifiya* also had repercussions on the leadership of the community. The feudal notables no longer enjoyed the same extent of authority owing to their loss of influence as a consequence of the collapse of the emirate. However, the leader of the peasant revolt – Yusuf Karam – was not able to appeal to the entire community. Instead, the Maronite patriarch mediated between the peasants led by Tannis Shahin and Christian notables; the patriarch encouraged the idea that Maronite unity could only be achieved under the patriarchate.[27]

This success proved that the head of the church was now the only credible Maronite actor who could guide the community. The patriarch also enjoyed influence over the administrative council. Furthermore, as France was the main protector of the new governing system, the patriarchate benefited from close ties not just with France but also the Vatican. Patriarch Masaad and his successors were able to reassert the temporal authority of the patriarchate. However, this also involved a complex balancing act to maintain the leading position of the church in the community without being regarded as disloyal to the Ottoman rulers. Relations with European powers were used to ensure that the office of the Maronite patriarch retained its distinctive independence.

By the late nineteenth century, the church was under increasing pressure from the Ottoman authorities to publicly submit to the authority of the

Sultan by requesting a *firman* (diploma), which granted legal recognition of a religious community.[28] The Maronite church continued to use its powerful connections to avoid this procedure, which it regarded as a rite of submission. In 1905, Patriarch Hoyek embarked on a crucial diplomatic tour to Rome and Paris in order to gain support for his continued avoidance of the *firman*. Yet, by ending his trip with a visit to the Sultan in Istanbul, he was able to demonstrate his loyalty to the ruling authorities.[29] It was not until the establishment of direct Ottoman rule of Mount Lebanon as a consequence of World War One that the Maronite patriarch was finally forced in 1916 to accept the *firman* as protection from local leaders.[30] Regardless of this eventual capitulation, the *mutasarrifiya* period allowed the Maronite patriarch to regain control of the community and assert temporal authority in Mount Lebanon.

The Maronites in mandate and independent Lebanon

With the ending of hostilities of World War One and the break-up of the Ottoman Empire, the Maronites were presented with an enormous opportunity to secure their own state. For this purpose, the administrative council charged Patriarch Hoyek with the task of attending the Versailles Peace Conference to prevent the establishment of Greater Syria and campaign for the creation of an independent Lebanese state. There were two distinct visions of Lebanon. The first 'Petit Liban' would include only Mount Lebanon and Beirut and create a country that would be a refuge for Christians in the Middle East and enjoy a clear Christian majority.

The second option, 'Grand Liban' would be based on the historic boundaries of the emirate of Fakhr al-Din II and include areas with significant Muslim populations such as Tyre, Saida and the Beqaa Valley. In this vision, it was presumed that the Christian presence in Lebanon would remain strong enough to influence the internal structure of the state and recognise the historic connections between the land and the Maronites, while simultaneously acknowledging Lebanon as a national homeland for all its citizens.[31] This second view attracted more support from the Maronite community including, crucially, the church hierarchy. At Versailles, Patriarch Hoyek secured his place as a founding father of modern Lebanon by successfully lobbying for the creation of a Lebanese state under French protection. With the announcement of the French mandate in Greater Lebanon in 1919, the Maronites had started their path towards their ultimate dream – a sovereign independent state.

Due to Muslim opposition to their forced presence in what they perceived as a 'Christian' state, the Maronites initially relied on the French authorities to ensure the survival of the fledging state. The Christian identity of Lebanon was emphasised, adding to the alienation experienced by Muslims. According to Picard, 'Christianity was strongly imprinted on the national identity, in contrast to the surrounding Arab states, which were all Islamic'.[32] The

establishment of civil government in 1926 also reawakened the traditional rivalry between the laity and patriarch over leadership of the community. Even after the formation of the presidency, the patriarch still enjoyed influence as a key mediator between the community and the French authorities.

Yet the desire for full independence led to a rift between the two historical allies. Patriarch Arida was outspoken in his criticism of several French policies. One concern was the tobacco monopoly, which was regarded as serving French economic interests rather than aiding the Lebanese.[33] Patriarch Arida regarded the mandate as a step to independence rather than a permanent situation and was concerned at the French suspension of constitutional government.

This led to an unlikely alliance with Syrian nationalist leaders. In return for supporting independence and promising that members of all communities would receive their rights as citizens in an independent Lebanon, the patriarch gained assurances that Muslim leaders would accept Lebanon as a separate entity from Syria. The Constitutional Bloc led by Bishara al-Khuri believed that full co-operation with the other communities would be the only way to attain independence.

This option gained support over the idea that Lebanon was primarily a homeland for Middle East Christians. Furthermore, aware that the only means to ensure a French withdrawal was to gain Maronite support for this position, influential Muslim leaders who had started to participate in the Lebanese political system recognised the early 1940s as the best opportunity to achieve these aims. Through co-operation and compromise, the political structure of a sovereign Lebanon was shaped.

The political system of the new Lebanese state was based on the 1943 National Pact (*al-Mithaq al-Watani*), an agreement between al-Khuri and Riyad al-Solh who recognised the need for pragmatism in order to establish a viable governing system. According to Cragg, it was an 'agreement of mutual accommodation based on a confessional order of power'.[34] Government positions were assigned on the basis of confessional identity and each community was represented in parliament according to its proportion of the population registered in the 1932 census.[35]

The National Pact also tried to resolve the complex issue of Lebanese identity. There was an acknowledgement of its Christian heritage but acceptance that it was a homeland for all its citizens. Picard states that Lebanon became a coexistence of communities rather than a Christian state.[36] Regarding external policy, there was recognition that Muslims must accept that Lebanon was a legitimate sovereign country, while Maronites had to renounce Western protection.

The National Pact was successful in attracting widespread support for independence among the different confessions. However, its pragmatic and informal nature meant that there were few provisions to amend the political system to reflect future changes, especially demographic ones. Furthermore, by institutionalising confessionalism, this power sharing agreement did little

to encourage a common Lebanese identity that could override confessional allegiances.

One major test occurred in 1958 when the strict neutrality enshrined in the National Pact was perceived by many to be violated. Under President Chamoun, Lebanon had adopted pro-Western and anti-communist policies in sharp contrast to developments in the rest of the Arab world where support for Nasser's pan-Arabism was strong. This reflected the different views of the Lebanese communities, as some Maronites regarded pan-Arabism as a threat to Lebanese sovereignty. Acceptance of the Eisenhower Doctrine enraged many Lebanese Muslims and illustrated the gap between government policies and some of the communities. The domestic context was also important as Chamoun was accused of rigging the 1957 elections and inflamed the situation by trying to amend the constitution in order to extend his time in office.[37]

These measures alienated influential Maronite actors as well as members of the Muslim communities and helped to prevent the unrest descending into confessional conflict. In particular, Patriarch Meouchi was instrumental in seeking a compromise solution. He publicly supported co-operation with Muslim leaders by meeting with members of the opposition, recognised the importance of pan-Arabism and denounced acceptance of the Eisenhower Doctrine. This 'sectarian tension managing' was vital in avoiding divisions on religious lines.[38] Some Maronites were concerned that by co-operating with the nationalist opposition, the patriarch was in danger of sacrificing key tenets of the Lebanese state. However, the patriarch stressed that the policies undertaken by Chamoun were detrimental to the unity of both the Lebanese people and the state.

Poor personal relations between the two men also increased the traditional rivalry between the two leaders of the Maronite community. While the Lebanese state survived the 1958 crisis, fundamental questions about Lebanese identity and the purpose of the state had still not been addressed, leaving the Maronite community disunited and uncertain of the future.

The impact of the civil war on the Maronites

The factors that have been identified as the cause of the Lebanese civil war (1975–1990) can mostly be traced to the unresolved issues inherent in the Lebanese political system since its inception.

Firstly, governments remained characterised by personal alliances rather than ideological differences. Kinship remained the most important tie. The *zuàma* (leaders of local communities) retained power by using their position to favour and protect the interests of their clients.[39] Each confession was represented by a few leading families rather than genuine political parties. These actors were willing to exploit the system in order to maintain their position.

Secondly, the laissez-faire economic policies adopted by the Lebanese

authorities led to uneven development. In particular, Mount Lebanon and urban Beirut prospered while the predominantly Shiite rural areas in the South and Beqaa valley remained underdeveloped. These areas also suffered most from Israeli retaliation against Palestinian raiding parties. Hanf suggests that this economic discontent was often articulated in the political arena as a socio-economic divide between rich Christians and poor Muslims.[40] This reinforced the perception of Muslim injustice that demographic change in favour of Muslim, especially Shiite, communities had not been accompanied by more political power.

Thirdly, the Lebanese identity crisis became more pronounced by the late 1960s. The Maronites still regarded themselves as a distinct group who, under the National Pact, were assured political dominance regardless of demographic change. Any challenge to this status quo was perceived as an attempt by Muslims to introduce *dhimmi* status to the only country where Middle East Christians were not treated as second-class citizens. In contrast, many Muslims stressed that Lebanon could not be isolated from its Arab and Islamic heritage and believed that Maronite opposition was solely motivated by a wish to deny them full political rights.

The Palestinian presence in Lebanon served to intensify this divide. The 1969 Cairo Agreement aimed to regulate Palestinian armed raids on Israel launched from Lebanon. While it recognised Lebanese sovereignty, it also permitted Palestinian organizations to arm within the refugee camps, thus giving them extraterritorial rights. Many Maronites were dismayed that Lebanese Muslims supported the Palestinians rather than defending their country, which regularly suffered Israeli retaliation for these attacks. These developments led to the polarization of Lebanese society with the conservative right anti-Palestinian alliance (mostly Christian) favouring the status quo while the leftist pro-Palestinian alliance (mostly Muslim but including many Greek Orthodox) campaigned for widespread political and economic changes.[41] Eventually, the simultaneous pressures proved too much for the weak Lebanese state and in 1975, a long and tragic civil war broke out.

The war had lasting repercussions on all the communities. Militias gained support because they were regarded as defending not just the physical safety of each group but also their cultural identity and right to exist. One consequence of the conflict was a strong sense of collective identity. Consequently, this led to a growing gulf between the different communities. Many Maronites believed that what they considered the raison d'être of Lebanon – a Christian homeland – was at risk. Desperate to retain Christian dominance, some suggested the establishment of a smaller overtly Christian state or a federal system where each community would enjoy autonomy in their respective areas.

In order to consolidate power, each community forcibly expelled members of other groups from their area, resulting in ethnic enclaves. While this affected all confessions, a significant amount of the 25 per cent of the population who were displaced was Christian.[42] Many Lebanese sought to escape

the violence. According to Labaki, the Christian proportion of overall emigration from Lebanon was 75 per cent in 1975 and 68 per cent in 1981.

All sides also committed atrocities including the killings in Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in 1982 by the Maronite Kataib militia, motivated partly by the assassination of the leader of the Lebanese Forces and president-elect Bashir Gemayel.[43] A recurring theme of the civil war was intra-confessional fighting. From the start of the conflict, internal disunity was rife among the Maronite groups whose leaders were manoeuvring to gain leadership of the community. The Kataib (connected to the influential Gemayel family) led attacks on militias attached to other leading Maronite families including the Franjiehs in 1978 and the Chamouns in 1980.[44] Although Bashir Gemayel managed to forcibly unite the Christian militias into the Lebanese Forces, conflict over the command of the militias resumed after his death in 1982.

Relations with Israel also proved a divisive issue. Some believed an alliance was necessary in order to secure a future for Lebanese Christians, while others such as former President Franjieh identified themselves as Arab and were aware that any connection with Israel could lead to severe repercussions from the other communities.[45]

In this fragmented context, the Maronite community was in desperate need of leadership. Historically, this had been provided by the church, especially in times of crisis. However, the church was torn by the same lack of unity that affected the wider community. The patriarch and many members of the Synod still believed in the need for coexistence with other Lebanese groups. Consequently, the patriarch concentrated on methods to restore interfaith relations with other religious leaders. In contrast to his predecessors, Patriarch Khreish argued that he only had moral authority and could not actively intervene in political developments.[46]

Thus, power within the church shifted to more radical factions, especially the Maronite monastic orders. Monks such as Sharbel Kassis and Abbot Boulos Naaman represented the elements of the clergy who believed that Islam was a threat to Maronite identity and argued that a separate Christian state had to be formed if Maronites could not retain their political power in Lebanon.[47] Nearing the end of the civil war, the Maronite church resembled the community – suffering, divided and impotent.

The Maronites in the Taif era

By 1989, ordinary Lebanese were weary of a war that had brought hardship, death and the ruin of their country. Thus, the latest negotiations to attain a peace agreement achieved more success than previous efforts.

The Document of National Understanding (known as the Taif Accord) tried to tackle the underlying issues behind the conflict.[48] Regarding political reforms, most Lebanese were aware that some changes had to be made. The powers endorsed in the three main government offices (president, prime minister and speaker) were modified to make these positions more equal.

Parliamentary representation was divided equally between Muslims and Christians and confessional quotas were halted, apart from high-level positions. The need for development policies throughout the country was also recognised.

The Taif Accord addressed the complex issue of Lebanese identity, stating that the country was 'Arab with a Lebanese twist', and acknowledging that in Lebanon one community was unable to dominate alone and instead, communities must coexist and share power.[49]

The agreement also dealt with external issues. The most important element of this was the recognition of the Syrian role. The Syrian presence in Lebanon (which commenced in 1976) was legalised with the condition that troops would deploy to the Beqaa Valley within two years. Close ties between the two countries were also to be encouraged, leading to Phares describe this process as the 'Syrianization of the country'.[50]

It was this aspect that caused friction among the Christian community. Some believed that there was little option but to accept Syrian influence, partly in order to preserve the Lebanese state and partly as the military capabilities of the Christian actors had been severely damaged during the war. The new patriarch, Nasrallah Sfeir worked to foster dialogue between the warring factions and supported the Taif Accord. Many militia leaders were also in favour as they were promised positions in the new political system. In contrast, General Michel Aoun, the caretaker Prime Minister and head of the army, rejected the agreement because it sanctioned the Syrian presence. Sporadic clashes between the Aoun army faction and the Maronite militias led to a new round of inter-Christian fighting, which left the Christian enclave divided and roughly one thousand people dead.[51] The patriarch publicly condemned this violence as 'collective suicide'.[52] While many ordinary Maronites remained loyal to Aoun's campaign to preserve Lebanese sovereignty, the loss of international support combined with a serious assault by Lebanese and Syrian forces, ended this resistance in October 1990 and is regarded as the last event of the civil war.

In this post-war context, the Maronite Church has sought to re-establish its position both in the community and also wider society. Immediately after the end of the conflict, the Vatican sponsored several initiatives to address the role of the Maronite church.[53] The Special Synod for Lebanon (1991–1995) emphasised the need for all Catholic communities in the country to work together to ensure spiritual renewal. It also highlighted the Vatican vision of Lebanon – a place where Christians and Muslims would jointly rebuild their country. The Vatican was active in ensuring that Muslim and non-Catholic Christian figures were present at the synod. Laurent suggests that the effects of the civil war had proved that authentic dialogue was needed and that Christians had to recognise that they lived in the Arab world and should seek to maintain ties with members of all groups in this region.[54] The following excerpt from a papal speech, 'Lebanon is more than a country: Lebanon is a message', became the inspiration for many Lebanese – both Christians and Muslims.[55]

This synod was followed by the Apostolic Exhortation 'A New Hope for Lebanon' which was signed by the Pope during his visit to Lebanon in 1997.[56] Thus, the role of the Maronites is envisaged by the Vatican as one of coexistence, moderation and harmony.

Patriarch Sfeir has also prioritised this idea in his own efforts to foster a spiritual renewal within the church. After decades of campaigning, a Maronite Synod was finally held in 2003.[57] At this synod, participants addressed key topics affecting the contemporary Maronite Church. Regarding identity and mission, the synod affirmed its Eastern origins and Syrian tradition and stressed the need both to reconcile differences between the various Christian churches and also to participate in interfaith dialogue. The synod discussed the role of the church in contemporary Lebanon arguing that Maronites should work towards 'coexistence and intercommunity harmony'.[58] Another issue raised was the global expansion of the church and methods to retain links between the patriarchate and members outside the patriarchal territory.

The synod is an important step in the renewal of both the church and the community. The participants are from all parts of the 'Maronite family' including clerics, laity and emigrants. The church hopes that this attempt to instigate reform will also bring new hope to the Maronite community in Lebanon. The hierarchy has also sought to address some of the social problems affecting its members. The church has tried to maintain its presence throughout the country and support the return of refugees to their villages. Through the monastic orders, education and health services have been provided. However, Maronite critics deem these efforts as inadequate, believing that the church should do more, including using its land to secure affordable housing.[59]

The political role of the Maronite Church became pronounced in the post-war period. This was partly due to the wartime destruction of the Maronite political elite as credible actors. Firstly, influential leaders who enjoyed popular support among the community were unable to participate in the political system due to imprisonment (Samir Geagea) or exile (Michel Aoun). Political parties tended to have a negative image, as most had participated in the civil war as militias. As al-Khazen explains, it was unsurprising that such groups had little credibility. 'Almost overnight militia leaders, whose entire career was linked to political violence and the abuse of power during the war, turned now into peace-makers and were the custodians of the political process in post-conflict Lebanon.'[60]

Secondly, there was no attempt to form a national unity government or develop a formal reconciliation process. Many Maronites perceived that their community were the main 'losers' in the war. The presidency still remained a Maronite position and several Maronite figures enjoyed power in the new regime. However, these politicians were not regarded as representative of the wider community.

The powers of the presidency were also reduced. The electoral laws were

amended to favour supporters of the pro-Syrian regime. As the opposition was mainly (though not completely) Christian, this served to disenfranchise many Christian voters. Christian involvement was also limited by an electoral boycott.[61]

The continued presence of Syrian troops in Lebanon was regarded as further proof that post-war Lebanon no longer resembled the country that the Maronites had helped to establish. Marginalised and discontented, the community turned to the one institution that could still represent their interests – the church.

During the initial post-war years, Patriarch Sfeir adopted a cautious approach, speaking out against electoral injustices but attempting to avoid any controversy so soon after the end of the conflict. The Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon in May 2000 provided an opportunity for the hierarchy to address some of the fundamental Maronite grievances. In September 2000, the monthly communiqué of the Maronite Bishops appealed to all Lebanese, listing concerns about the political system, economic crisis and Lebanese sovereignty.[62] While these issues had been raised by the patriarch before, this was the first time that they had been published as one document. A year later, the impact of this appeal was analysed, with the observation that the authorities had rejected any dialogue initiatives but Lebanese people of all confessions had demonstrated their support. Consequently, patriarchal messages and communiqués often deal with political issues. Repeated appeals for the withdrawal of Syrian troops were placed in the context of regaining sovereignty as outlined in the Taif Accord. They were also concerned about the impact of Syrian influence on Lebanese identity, and advocated that the two countries should be close but independent.

The patriarch unsuccessfully opposed Syrian efforts to amend the constitution in 2004 in order to allow the incumbent Emile Lahoud to retain his position. Each time Patriarch Sfeir addressed the Syrian issue, he relentlessly argued that he was only calling for the full implementation of the Taif Accord. Thus, he justified his support of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1559, as it sought the same measures as the Taif Accord, namely the restoration of Lebanese sovereignty and the withdrawal of foreign forces.[63]

Other topics raised by the patriarch include the electoral laws, repression against opposition groups and the long-standing economic crisis. Regarding the latter, he has constantly expressed his dismay at the inability of successive governments to tackle the crippling national debt. When dealing with issues affecting daily life, the patriarch states that he is speaking on behalf of all Lebanese, not just Maronites. This reflects the view held by the hierarchy concerning their role in Lebanon. Throughout their declarations, they have been eager to stress that their vision of Lebanon is a country that enjoys national unity and that all Lebanese can attain political participation and economic prosperity. Other measures taken by the patriarch to encourage working relations between the different confessions

include a visit in 2001 to the Chouf area (the scene of several Maronite–Druze conflicts).

The response to these political activities has been mixed. In general, the attempt of the patriarch to fill the Maronite leadership vacuum has been welcomed by the community, as few other actors were willing or able to present their views. As the head of the church, the patriarch is expected to comment on issues affecting his community. The pro-Syrian government tried to improve relations with Bkerke (the patriarchal seat), recognising the influence of the patriarch over the community. Government figures often met with the patriarch to discuss issues. However, few practical measures were taken to address the demands of the communiqués. In particular, only token redeployment of Syrian troops occurred from June 2001 onwards and many troops remained in the Beqaa region.

The government also sought to exploit divisions between Bkerke and opposition groups by targeting specific activists. On the whole, the reaction of other communities has been favourable. Many respect that the patriarch is addressing issues that affect all Lebanese and that he has avoided the use of sectarian language. While his views on Syrian influence were rarely shared by Muslim communities, the absence of sectarian language by the patriarch meant that disagreements remained verbal and did not lead to violence.

Prospects for the Maronites in Lebanon

The assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri in February 2005 dramatically affected the political status quo in Lebanon. The Syrian position was adversely affected by two different tracks. Firstly, mass street demonstrations called for change and forced the resignation of the government. Secondly, there were renewed efforts by the international community to attain Lebanese sovereignty. Consequently, Syrian troops withdrew, new elections were held and a government consisting mainly of opposition actors was elected.

While this would appear to be a positive development for the Maronites, it is clear that the system is still in flux. At present, the pro-Syrian president Emile Lahoud has managed to resist attempts to force him out of office before his mandate expired in 2007 and prominent figures in the previous governments still enjoy official positions. The Christian political leadership continues to suffer from internal disunity. Although Aoun has returned to participate in Lebanese politics, his Free Patriotic Movement did not ally with the main opposition parties (known as March 14 forces). Instead, in the Mount Lebanon and Zahle districts, Aoun allied with Michel Murr, a key figure in the previous pro-Syrian regime and defeated several Christian opposition politicians.[64] Aoun has since signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Hizb'allah.

Commenting on this lack of unity, Patriarch Sfeir deplored the 'chaos prevailing within Christian ranks'.[65] During 2005, the patriarch raised several issues including the use of the existing electoral law, the tendency of politi-

cians to pursue their own interests and a series of bomb attacks, whose targets were mostly Christian.[66] Although the return of key Maronite lay political actors may eventually affect the political role of the patriarch, at present, the patriarch remains influential in voicing the concerns of not only his community but also many ordinary Lebanese.

The future of the Maronite community continues to be shaped by regional instability. This was vividly illustrated by the clash between Israeli and Hizb̀allah forces, which escalated into a month-long war on 12 July 2006. Several areas of Lebanon were left devastated and many civilians were killed, injured and lost their homes.[67] While Shiite areas were predominantly targeted, damage to the infrastructure and image of Lebanon hurt all Lebanese. During the war, Christians provided humanitarian aid for the displaced.

This conflict also demonstrated the ambiguous attitudes held by Maronites towards Hizb̀allah. With the withdrawal of Syrian forces in 2005, many Lebanese (from different communities) believed that it was time to force the organization to give up its arms and transform into a purely political party. Maronites had long resented that unlike Christian militias, this Shiite militia had been authorised to retain their weapons. In September 2005, the Maronite bishops indirectly called for the disarmament of Hizb̀allah according to the Taif Accord. This cautious approach partly reflects the acknowledgement that Hizb̀allah is extremely popular among Shiites, who after all, are becoming the largest Lebanese community. However, most Lebanese also recognise the role of the resistance movement in ending the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon in 2000. Furthermore, its leaders have worked to avoid being seen as anti-Christian, and ensured that the entire nation joined in celebrations after the Israeli withdrawal.

When asked if Hizb̀allah was a terrorist organization, Patriarch Sfeir answered, 'These men are Lebanese citizens trying to free their country from foreign occupation; we all thank them for their efforts'.[68] While many Lebanese are likely to question in the future if the costs of this one Hizb̀allah operation have proved too high, once under Israeli attack, most voiced their support for the resistance. Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement maintained its electoral alliance with Hizb̀allah and Patriarch Sfeir condemned Israeli attacks as war crimes. During the conflict, the patriarch hosted a meeting of religious leaders to condemn Israeli action and urge the need to attain peace. Again, the unique nature of Lebanon was stressed in order to highlight that all Lebanese society was affected by the violence. The patriarch remarked, 'Lebanon was and still is a living example of coexistence and perhaps this is the characteristic that is vexing those who want to destroy it'.[69]

Yet, after the war, he has returned to indirectly criticising the actions of Hizb̀allah.[70] Clearly, such events pose a threat to both national unity and a stable future for the Maronites of Lebanon.

Conclusion

Throughout the ages, the Maronite community has managed to retain its autonomous status, and consequently made a significant contribution to the independent state of Lebanon. Although the civil war was damaging to Maronite political dominance, it is clear that the community has still escaped *dhimmi* status and continues to be an important Christian presence in the Middle East. As in the past, the Maronite Church has sought to provide guidance during turbulent periods, arguing that it is the duty of the patriarch, as the head of the community, to act as political spokesman.

There is a strong symbiotic relationship between the church and community. The role of the Maronite Church, especially the patriarch, is greatly affected by events in the community. Yet simultaneously, the well-being of the community often depends on the strength of the church. Under Patriarch Sfeir, the church has successfully managed to fill the Maronite leadership vacuum and also encouraged spiritual renewal. However, the involvement of religious leaders in politics does not bode well for efforts to overcome confessional differences and develop a truly national identity – necessary to ensure lasting peace. The failure of the Lebanese to resolve differences over the identity and character of the state has left the country open to outside interference, which on several occasions has led to conflict. In such an unstable environment, the Maronite community will continue to face challenges in their attempt to retain their political and civil rights in their traditional homeland.

4   'The Church across the border'

The Church of the East and its Chaldaean branch[1]

John Healey

The modern history of the so-called Church of the East is marked by intermittent and partial unions with Rome, culminating in the creation of the separate Chaldaean Catholic Church. The theological disputes lying behind this process have now been largely resolved (though the future of the interchurch dialogue that led to this resolution is unclear, as we will see below). The Ottoman Empire had created external political circumstances, which have also now disappeared. Despite its many difficulties over the last 150 years, the Church of the East has continued as the main historic stream of both communions, from which, it can be argued, the Chaldaean Catholic Church has been temporarily diverted. The signs of a breaking down of the barriers between the two churches suggest that one can now imagine a reunited Church of the East with both streams flowing together again, in harmony with and alongside the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox traditions.

Although the focus of the present volume is on the Middle Eastern Christians in the modern era, it is essential here to refer to the earliest history of the Church, since there are historical factors which were formative in the creation of the tradition that have continued to operate until very recently. 'Very recently' in this context brings us to the present-day success of the two branches of the Church of the East in the United States and, alarmingly, to the present situation in Iraq. At the time of writing (mid-2007, with minor revisions in 2008) there is great uncertainty over what will be the outcome in Iraq and what effect this will have on the Christian communities, of whom the Chaldaeans form the largest unified group. To quote from a report that came to hand as this article was being written:

> Fifty thousand Iraqis are fleeing the country each month, according to the UN. While they make up 5 per cent of the population, Christians constitute 40 per cent of those fleeing. (Michael Hirst, *Tablet*, 28 April 2007, 38)

It is possible that the U.S. and its allies are presiding over and witnessing the final destruction of Christianity in Iraq, bringing to an end a tradition that reaches back almost 2,000 years.

Early history

From its beginnings the Iraqi church – in this context 'Iraq' refers to a geographical area rather than a political entity – was 'the Church across the Border', since in the first centuries A.D. the Middle Eastern world was divided between the Roman Empire in the west (Anatolia, Syria, Palestine, northern Arabia, Egypt) and the Parthian Empire in the east (most of Mesopotamia, Iran, the Gulf). Although these two great powers were transformed in the third/fourth centuries A.D. into the Byzantine Empire on the one hand and the Sasanian Empire on the other, the fundamental geopolitics did not change. Mesopotamia remained the territory of an eastern empire. It was only in the seventh century A.D., under Islam, that most of the Middle Eastern lands of the Byzantines and the Sasanians were brought under a single rule. By then, however, the distinctive character of the Church of the East had already been formed.

The significance of the border in the first seven centuries A.D. cannot be overstressed. The Christianity that arrived in southern Iraq, perhaps as early as the first century A.D. (though there is still discussion among more sceptical historians about the reliability of the Church traditions and reports of early missionary activity), was identical with the Christianity that was spreading throughout the Roman world at the same time. What was distinctive was the fact that most of Mesopotamia was not part of that Roman world. The struggle of the early Christians in Iraq was not against the hostility of Roman authorities, but against the hostility of Parthian and Sasanian authorities. This situation immediately created a problem for the emergent church of this part of the world, which came to be centred on Seleukia-Ctesiphon to the south of modern Baghdad (long before the latter was founded): that of being part of a religious movement that was associated especially with the West. When Constantine began the process that turned Christianity into the official religion of the Byzantine Empire, their neighbours associated Iraqi and Iranian Christians with 'the enemy'.

It is worth pausing here to reflect on the fact that the Iraqi church's relationship with the rest of the church in the West was quite normal apart from the issue of the border. The way the church was developing was through a hierarchical system of major patriarchies with, eventually, Constantinople and Rome predominant. The Iraqi church shared in the life of the universal church, sending representatives to the Council of Nicaea in 325 and eventually forming its own patriarchy.

However, a combination of political isolation and theological partisanship led to the independence of the Church of the East. This independence did not arise from a dramatic act of secession. Rather, it happened slowly, almost imperceptibly. Church of the East declarations of autocephaly (i.e. being subject to no external authority) came early (from 424), but the doctrinal shift towards what came to be labelled as 'Nestorianism' is seen by contrasting the Synod of Seleukia held in 410, which endorsed a (revised) wording of

the decisions of the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea of 325, and the Synod of 486, also held in Seleukia. This was where the teachings of Theodore of Mopsuestia were endorsed and Nestorius was upheld, contrary to the decisions of the Council of Ephesus of 431. Soon afterwards, in 489, the Persian School at Edessa, where the works of Theodore had been translated into Syriac, was closed down, accused of Nestorianism, and many of its members, who opposed the new monophysitism of the area, fled to the Sasanian Empire (where they founded the School of Nisibis).

The theological issue involved was complex and there were linguistic difficulties for the Syriac-speaking churches, which did not help matters. The 1994 'Common Christological Declaration' of Pope John Paul II and Mar Dinkha IV of the Church of the East (see below) was made on the basis of putting the disagreements into historical and linguistic perspective, admitting that failure of communication and ecclesiastical politics were to blame. At the time, however, the issue was real enough: in describing the personality of Jesus, to what extent should we distinguish his human nature from his divine nature? Nestorius, with all the authority of the Patriarch of Constantinople, inspired by Theodore of Mopsuestia and Diodore of Tarsus, emphasized rather than minimized the distinction of the two natures (and hence his position came to be stigmatized as 'dyophysite'), but Nestorius and his mentors were condemned by the Council of Ephesus (431). The Sasanian Church was not immediately and directly involved in this controversy, but its bishops and theologians, mostly trained in the Persian School of Edessa, sympathized with the deposed Nestorius – again with much confusion over precise meanings of words – and continued to favour dyophysite theologians and formulations. Eventually the Church of the East's so-called 'dyophysite' position was made clear by Mar Babai the Great, principal theologian of the Church during an interregnum in the patriarchate in 608–628 (Baum and Winkler 2003: 37–39; Rassam 2005: 46–47).

Of course within the Byzantine Empire such dalliance with heterodoxy was more dangerous, since the Emperor enforced conformity with the decisions of the imperial church. But *outside the Empire*, beyond the border, no such policing was possible and the Church of Seleukia became attached to its dyophysite theologians, with Theodore of Mospuestia and Nestorius coming to be counted among the greatest of theological heroes. *De facto* the Church of the East (as it eventually came to be generally called) had separated itself from the western church and contact from then on was intermittent and often polemical. The Church of the East cultivated its own traditions and conducted its own extensive missionary enterprises in the Gulf, Central Asia, China, and, with lasting effect, India.

This is not the place for a detailed recital of the history of the Church of the East. There are a number of good recent accounts (Baum and Winkler 2003; Rassam 2005; Baumer 2006). But the main early feature described above, isolation from the rest of the world Church, was further reinforced in the Islamic period. In theory the Islamic Empire embraced many Christians

who were co-religionists of the Patriarch of Seleukia, but by the seventh century the christological disputes referred to earlier had become ossified, so that 'Nestorians' were regarded as heretics by both the Greek Orthodox (Palestine, Syria, Anatolia) and the Syrian Orthodox and Copts (Syria, Egypt): there could be no warm embraces simply because the border had disappeared. Wording, especially in liturgy, becomes sanctified by usage and the Church of the East was not going to delete its favourable references to Nestorius and Theodore any more than the Latin Church would now drop the *filioque* clause. Resolution of such entrenched difficulties would have to wait for a post-Enlightenment modernism to be established, with a willingness to relativize historical baggage, if not totally to dispose of it.

The Church of the East flourished in the early centuries of Muslim rule, especially in the Abbasid period, during which its scholars, multilingual in Greek, Syriac and Arabic and often associated with the great 'Nestorian' centre of Jundishapur in Iran, made a major contribution to the development of what is usually called 'Islamic Science' (a title that overlooks the role of Jews, Christians and Harranians) (Rassam 2005: 53–54, 80–86). This golden age, however, was not to last and subsequent upheavals in the area led to a retreat on the part of the Church, which suffered repeatedly in the terrible wars for control of the Muslim world, including the wars instigated by the Crusaders: again the Christians of the Middle East found themselves caught between loyalty to a greater Christendom (the Christianity of the then known world) and the states in which they lived. In broad terms the strategy adopted was one of quietism and retreat. The 'Nestorians' were reduced to what became their traditional rural territories in northern Mesopotamia (in modern Turkey, Iraq and Iran). Their cultural contact with the outside world was reduced; their pre-eminence in science and medicine was completely lost; their intellectual tradition faded. Patriarchs of the Church became ethnarchs, acting as protectors of and spokesmen for the Christian tribal groupings under them.

The Ottoman period

The rise of the Ottoman Empire saw these informal arrangements turned into more formal ones. The Church of the East became part of the system of self-governing nations unified by a common faith, the *millet* system, though its *millet* status was only formalized much later. In the *millet* system the particular community had a kind of autonomy under the authority of the Patriarch, who was accountable to Istanbul. This kind of arrangement (which had its origins in pre-Ottoman times) had many advantages, but one of its *disadvantages* was the fact that it isolated the community from the numerically dominant local Muslim populations in what are now eastern Turkey, western Iran and northern Iraq. Specifically the Christians constituted isolated pockets within territories in which for the most part Kurdish *agha*s acted as local rulers of *their own* populations. Neither on the local level nor on the Ottoman

imperial level was there any need for the Christians to work in a cooperative and integrated way with their fellow citizens.

External contacts with other Christian powers came to be seen by the Christians as another strand in a policy aimed at self-preservation. There was some contact with Rome under Patriarch Yahballaha III (1281–1317), but the first formal alliance with the western church came in the fifteenth century, when the Church of the East outpost on Cyprus formed a short-lived union with Rome. Thereafter there were other contacts, leading to the first effective act of formal union between the Church of the East and Rome. This occurred in the context of a dispute over the succession to the patriarchy in 1552.

Succession to the patriarchy had by this date become formalized within a family in which nephew succeeded uncle. While this made sense in the context of the role of the patriarch as ethnarch, it was by all Christian standards an odd way to determine who should be spiritual head of a church (though the hereditary English monarch is supreme head of the Church of England!) Such an arrangement can lead to the succession of very unsuitable candidates. It also engendered internal frustration and dissatisfaction: however saintly, learned and gifted a bishop might be, only someone from the patriarch's family could become leader the Church.

In reaction against this system, in 1552 John Sulaqa, who had no family claim to the patriarchy, was elected patriarch by a group of bishops and went to Rome to get papal approval. This was granted (in dubious circumstances, since he claimed the canonically 'correct' patriarch, Mar Shimun VIII [1551–1558], had died!) and he returned home as Patriarch John VIII Sulaqa of the Chaldaeans. His see was at Amid/Diyarbakir, though under his successors it was moved eventually to Qodshanis in the Hakkari mountains of Kurdistan, while the sidelined Mar Shimun VIII was based in Alqosh.

The term 'Chaldaeans' requires comment. It had been used of the so-called 'Nestorians' of Cyprus who united with Rome. There are traces of earlier use of the term, though in earlier sources it is mainly restricted to a linguistic context, as Fiey demonstrated (Fiey 1996). A recent publication has suggested the term might have been used of Iraqi Christians as early as the time of Shapur II (309–379) and was later suppressed (Jammo 2006). The issue has, in fact, become entangled in the politics of identity in present-day Iraq. Whatever is claimed about the earliest usage of the title, it is in any case slightly odd as the name for the Church, having a biblical root in the name of the inhabitants of Abraham's city of origin, Ur of the Chaldaeans to the south of Baghdad, and subsequently coming to refer to astrologers and magicians, e.g. in the Book of Daniel and in later classical literature. Despite its complex history, the title has become firmly established.

The Sulaqa 'Chaldaean' union was not, however, stable. Firstly, not all members of the Church accepted the union, which involved some resiling from traditional beliefs and practices. John found full support in only a few dioceses. Secondly, under the Ottoman system the patriarch needed to be recognized as head of an ethnic community or *millet* by the Sublime Porte

and this recognition was not forthcoming. Instead the canonically correct Shimun VIII had the blessing of Istanbul, leaving John Sulaqa with spiritual authority only – and he was eventually jailed and executed by the Ottoman governor of ʿAmadiyah in 1555. And thirdly a number of his successors backed off from the doctrinal and liturgical concessions John had made and failed, therefore, to get the approval of the Holy See. As a result this Roman-approved church survived for only 120 years until 1672, and even then not consistently. The patriarchal line of Sulaqa did not, however, disappear. It survived as the focus of an independent church, to re-emerge later to provide 'legitimate' patriarchs for the Church of the East itself, in a line stretching down to Mar Dinkha IV Khananya (1976–).

However, the idea of making deals with Rome became quite popular and several further bouts of negotiation took place, both between the Holy See and the Sulaqa patriarchal line and between the Holy See and the 'traditional' Church of the East. The story of splits in the patriarchy at this time is a sad one and too complex for recital in detail. It came to an end eventually in 1830, when the Holy See finally recognized and established as head of the Chaldaean Catholic Church the Chaldaean Patriarch John VIII Hormizd, whose line of succession leads down ultimately to Emmanuel III Delly (2003–), and these patriarchs were in turn accepted by the Ottomans in 1844 as heading a separate *millet*. From that time onwards there were two main Iraqi church communities, the Church of the East and the Chaldaean Catholic Church with its seat at Mosul (moved to Baghdad in 1950).

This did not mark the complete end of disputes. There were, in fact, ongoing disagreements between Chaldaean patriarchs and the Holy See, notably under the patriarchy of Joseph VI Audo (1848–1878), though the two sides were ultimately reconciled.

Thus after 1830 the situation had become much clearer and for the best part of the last 200 years the Chaldaean Church has been the majority Christian denomination of Iraq, constituting about 70 per cent of the Christians.

While the Chaldaeans suffered along with other Christians and Kurds in the break-up of the Ottoman Empire during World War I, losing some 70–100,000 members to massacres in the period 1915–1918, they showed much less inclination than the mainstream Church of the East towards nationalist aspirations, becoming an integral part of the Iraqi state after it gained its independence in 1932. During this period of transition from Ottoman rule to independence the Church was led cautiously and wisely by its patriarch, Joseph Emmanuel II Thomas (1900–1947).

In view of its engagement with the Iraqi state it is not surprising that on the whole the Chaldaean community prospered – within the limits that applied to all Iraqis – during the period of the monarchy and subsequent Baathist rule. Secularist Christians had been involved in the foundation of the Baath movement, notably the Syrian Michel Aflaq, who was of Greek Orthodox family, and Saddam did not act specifically against the Chaldaeans, who on

the whole, like the other Christians of Iraq and those of Syria, became loyal supporters of the state. The Church came to be heavily Arabized (Murre-van den Berg 2007: 258). Of course the outsider is wise not to get carried away with too cosy a picture: it goes without saying that all Christians in Turkey, Iraq and Iran have been and still are second-class citizens and even more vulnerable than their Muslim neighbours to the vagaries of dictatorial rule. But Chaldaeans were able to have senior roles in Saddam's government (Tariq Aziz), as Christians had during the period of the monarchy. They could achieve success in the professions and live their church lives in relative freedom.

The Chaldaeans did, however, suffer later from the circumstances of the Kurdish unrest in northern Iraq, and vast numbers moved out of that region to Baghdad. Under Patriarchs Paul II Cheikho (1958–1989) and then Raphael I Bidawid (1989–2003), the Church rose to the challenge of coping with large urbanized congregations (up to 250,000 in Baghdad alone).

The Chaldaeans' greatest strength in the twentieth century, education, created, however, a certain communal vulnerability. Through the activities of the Dominicans, Carmelites and Jesuits, along with a full appreciation of the benefits of modern, western-style education, the Chaldaeans came to the forefront of the professions. The weakness here was that this was almost inevitably perceived by some Muslims as privilege (though Muslim children were welcome in the great church schools such as the Jesuit Baghdad College). All such institutions, including the Jesuit al-Hikmah University, were eventually 'Iraqicized' under Saddam Hussain and the Jesuits left.

Chaldaean Christians always had good contacts outside Iraq, with many families having branches in Europe and the United States. When circumstances were from time to time difficult in Iraq, they were among those Iraqis who could easily migrate, taking their professional skills with them, for example to British hospitals and universities. This trickle of migration has, at the time this is being written, become a flood, which threatens to reduce the Chaldaean community to such an extent that it might become non-viable, perhaps unable to maintain its churches and other institutions and perhaps unable to provide a pool of young people to form the next generations. The challenge before the new Patriarch, Emmanuel III Delly (2003–) is formidable.

The Assyrian Church of the East

The fate of the Church of the East since the early nineteenth century has been very different. While it lost members to the Chaldaeans, it also came under a different kind of pressure from British and American Protestant missionary activity. The history of this involvement of missionaries has been fully documented (Joseph 1961, 2000; Coakley 1992). It had the potential to give members of the Church of the East the same kind of educational advantages that were characteristic of the Chaldaeans. But events turned out differently, deeply affected by political circumstances.

The Church of the East in the mid to late nineteenth century was geographically and socially divided into two groups: farmers in the area to the north of Mosul and the so-called 'mountain Nestorians' in eastern Turkey and Iran. The latter were a fiercely independent and somewhat warlike group of tribes ruled by chiefs or *malik*s. The patriarch presided over the two groups. They sometimes allied with and sometimes fought against their Kurdish neighbours. The presence in the Urmiyah region of Russian occupiers (from the 1820s), as well as the activities of the missionaries, complicated the patriarch's task.

The autonomy provided by the *millet* system, while having offered a protective shield in earlier centuries, became an Achilles' heel in the period of the *tanzimat* reforms in the Empire (from 1839). The reforms brought with them modernist notions of the nation-state and separation of secular and religious powers. Surrounded especially by Kurds, who had their own bone to pick with the Ottoman authorities and who welcomed the reform of the Empire and the consequent prospect of autonomy and independence in a nation-state, the Church of the East and its patriarchs began to develop similar ideas, of European protection and even independence. They did not want to swap the Ottoman Empire for a Kurdish Republic in which their existing autonomy would be unlikely to survive, and they began to think in terms of an Assyrian state. This term 'Assyrian' became increasingly popular, encouraged by A. H. Layard's assertion that the Nestorians were the descendants of his ancient Assyrians. The term was later incorporated into the title of the church so that it became the Assyrian Church of the East.

From around 1830 American Presbyterian missionaries began to be involved in the area. In 1834 the Reverend Justin Perkins arrived in Urmiyah and in 1835, so did the Reverend Asahel Grant. British Anglican missionaries soon followed, notably George Percy Badger in 1842. Their presence upset a delicate balance of power locally and ultimately disturbed Kurdish opinion. They were drawn into creating *political* expectations for the Assyrians, expectations of protection against the Kurds, who were asserting themselves against Ottoman power and pushing for an independent state. For example, Badger tried to obtain Ottoman recognition of the civil authority of the Patriarch over the Hakkari region. Local Kurdish *emir*s like Badr Khan (later punished by the Ottomans when they regained control) were trying to establish a Kurdish state and were instrumental in massacres of Christians. In 1843, between 15,000 and 20,000 Christians were killed.

The end result of these manoeuvres for the c. 150,000 Church of the East Christians at the end of the nineteenth century (Baum and Winkler 2003: 135) were the persecutions and massacres of the period before, during and after the First World War, especially in 1915–1918. In April 1915, Turkish interior minister Talat Pasha instituted a widespread campaign of persecution in the East that led to many Assyrian Christians, perhaps 50,000, fleeing to seek Russian protection with their co-religionists around Urmiyah. Seen as allies of the Russians, many were killed as they fled. Indeed the Patriarch Mar

Shimun XIX Benjamin declared war on Turkey in May 1915, an action that was emblematic of the association of the Assyrians with the enemies of Turkey. Meanwhile, those who obtained Russian protection lost it again in 1917 when the Russian Revolution caused the collapse of the Russian army. Then in June 1918 about 100,000 Assyrians marched south to seek British protection. Half survived the rigours of the journey and settled in the area of Baghdad. Thus now the Assyrians were scattered and divided, with some in northern Iraq and many in the Baghdad area, protégées of the British. Others were in Syria, Iran and, increasingly, the United States. The final word in this phase of the story is one of disappointment. Despite a petition from the Patriarch Shimun XXI Eshai to the 1924 Lausanne Conference after World War I, the League of Nations in 1925 assigned the Hakkari region, the former territory of the Church of the East, to the Turkish Republic, thus ending all real hope of the establishment of an Assyrian state or autonomous zone in the historic homelands.

Revival: a North American Church?

It is arguable that the United States provided the spiritual salvation of the Church of the East, at the very moment when its nationalist political dalliance had been brought to ruin. Essentially the Church rediscovered its spiritual identity and Chicago and California became the main centres of the Church. Much of the credit for this can be ascribed to Mar Shimun XXI Eshai, patriarch from 1920 to 1975. Although initially resident in Baghdad, Shimun was deprived of his Iraqi citizenship in 1933 after refusing to relinquish temporal authority over his community, and he was deported initially to Cyprus. Rendered stateless, he ultimately took refuge in the United States in 1940 and ended up in Chicago. He really remade the Church, so that it became a church in the western sense of the term, not an ethnic self-governing geographical or psychological enclave, but a spiritual organization with its own unique theological and liturgical tradition alongside churches like the Syrian Orthodox and Armenian and Episcopalian.

Sadly the end of Mar Shimun Eshai's reign was marked by disputes after he adapted the Church of the East religious calendar to that of the western churches in 1964. There were also old tribal loyalties involved and a resistance to the hereditary appointment of patriarchs: Mar Shimun himself had arrived at the patriarchy by this route at the age of eleven. The Ancient Church of the East or Old Apostolic and Catholic Church of the East formed a separate entity, retaining the old calendar (from 1968). This dispute or his reconciliation with the Iraqi government in 1970 may have been the motivation behind the murder of Mar Shimun by a fellow Assyrian in California in 1975. He was succeeded by Mar Dinkha IV Khananya (appointed after an election), who initially resided in Tehran but moved to Chicago as a result of the Iran–Iraq War.

There were many great fruits and benefits from the transformation of the

Church of the East's view of itself. Apart from the effective church organization that emerged, there were enormous benefits in terms of ecumenical engagement with other churches (in a context in which such contacts presented no threat). Church of the East representatives attended Vatican II as invited observers (from 1964). Perhaps most astonishing has been the long series of theological discussions with the Roman Catholic Church, which resulted in the signing by Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Mar Dinkha IV Khananya in 1994 of a common declaration on christology which removed all barriers in this area (see Appendix). When one considers that what set the western church and the Church of the East at odds in the fifth century was precisely a disagreement about the wording of doctrine on this topic of christology (hence the accusation of Nestorianism – though the theology was really that of Theodore of Mopsuestia rather than Nestorius himself), the reconciliation was astonishing. It subsequently led to approval under defined circumstances of intercommunion between members of the Church of the East and the Chaldaean Church. This involved the removal of another long-standing obstacle, the fact that the *Anaphora of Addai and Mari* does not include the 'words of institution' of the Eucharist. (A detailed account of the Syriac churches' various dialogues with other churches can be found in Brock 2004a.)

At the time of writing there is uncertainty about future dialogue. Bishop Mar Bawai Soro of San Jose, who had been the main theologian on the Church of the East's side of the discussion, was removed as bishop of his California diocese by the Patriarch and Synod in November 2005, having been in dispute with his Church. In 2008 he and a group of priests of the Church of the East decided to seek to join the Chaldaean communion, though this had not, at the time of writing, received formal approval in Rome. The dialogue with the Church of the East is still important to the Roman Catholic Church (as is evidenced by the visit of Mar Dinkha to Pope Benedict in June 2007) and that dialogue would be endangered by realignments of this kind at this stage.

The nineteenth- and early twentieth-century history of the so-called Assyrians, like that of the Armenians and many other Christian groups of the Middle East, is indelibly marked by the violent struggles that led to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the interference of the imperialist forces of Britain and Russia in the region and the efforts of Arabs and Turks to create stable unitary states out of the rubble. Continuing troubles have undermined the self-confidence of the Middle East Christians in general. Christians whose ancestral homes are both in Iraq, and in Palestine and Lebanon have become increasingly uncertain that they have any secure future. Overall the Christian population of the Middle East has plummeted in the last hundred years. O'Mahony estimates that 250,000 Christians have left Iraq even since 1990 (2004b: 135). The figures cited in the *Tablet* report cited above suggest that in early 2007, 20,000 were leaving each month.

Statistics on membership of the Middle Eastern churches are notoriously

difficult to pin down. To cite recently published figures, Bailey and Bailey (2003) and Baumer (2006) agree on the following figures for membership, based on information supplied by the churches themselves:

Church of the East worldwide	400,000
Chaldaeans in Iraq	750,000
Chaldaeans in the U.S.	180,000

O'Mahony's very recent figure for the Church of the East is 385,000, with 70,000 followers of the old calendar (2006b: 526): these figures seem broadly in line with the figure given above. Chaldaean statistics based on Vatican statistical records derived from *Annuario Pontificio* suggest a much smaller number of Chaldaeans, approximately 360,000 worldwide in 2005 (Roberson 2006), and O'Mahony's figure is again much smaller (2006b: 530).

The Assyrians and Chaldaeans (to use abbreviated names) continue to suffer greatly from the trials of Iraq. Ironically they are today experiencing precisely the same difficulty which goes all the way back to the earliest recorded Christian history of the region, adherence to a religion associated, at least in the popular mind, with the West.

The future

The current dire political situation in Iraq has resurrected some ideas that might have been thought extinct, specifically the siren-voice suggesting that a solution should be sought for the Church of the East in a geographical enclave of the kind that existed in earlier times, but now located in northern Iraq. I first became aware of this line of thought when I was asked to take part in a BBC World Service discussion on the Assyrians shortly after the allied invasion in 2003. The proposal presented to me by an American-Assyrian in the studio discussion was that the Assyrians could only be truly safe if they were given an exclusive territory in northern Iraq, tantamount to a separate state or at least an autonomous region.

My immediate reaction on air was one of extreme caution. I was worried that this was dangerous talk; it put the Assyrians and other Christians (again) into the position of claiming special treatment; even if it were only a studio discussion, such discussions could have effects on the streets of Baghdad and Mosul; the Christians had, by the end of the twentieth century become largely integrated, at least geographically, with their Muslim neighbours: what would happen in mixed neighbourhoods in Baghdad? How would the putative enclave be created and precisely where? How would the Kurds, who were just at that moment establishing their autonomous region in the north of Iraq, react to such a proposal? And would such an enclave not immediately become another focus of unrest?

The rate at which Christians have been leaving Iraq testifies, however, to the fact that some of the Christian fears, which surfaced soon after the

'liberation', have been fully justified and it is not surprising that talk of autonomy has persisted. The Assyrian Democratic Movement, which has representation in the Iraqi parliament, and Assyrians connected with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), have not abandoned the idea. And a prominent minister in the KRG, Sarkis Aghajan, supports one version of the proposal. The bolstering of the Christian population of the KRG autonomous region appears to be seen as beneficial in the wider campaign for full and permanent independence.

There are, however, many differing views on the matter, with proposals ranging from support for total independence (which few seem to advocate) to an autonomous governorate in the Nineveh Plains area to the north and east of Mosul, attached either to the Baghdad administration or to the KRG. Others speak more vaguely of a 'safe haven' for the Assyrians and other Christians, though this raises many questions about the defence of such a safe haven and its long-term purpose. Many, probably most Christians in Iraq, oppose the notion of such an enclave: the Chaldaean Archbishop of Kirkuk, Louis Sako, has spoken up clearly in opposition to it.

Meanwhile, some Christians are moving into the Kurdish-controlled area and re-establishing their religious institutions there. The Chaldaean patriarch, Emmanuel III Delly, cooperates with the KRG in this return of the Chaldaeans to the North. There is even talk of a return of the patriarchate of the Church of the East from the U.S. These moves may in the end depend on whether the security situation continues to improve in Baghdad.

The Vatican plays an especially sensitive role. Quite apart from Pope Benedict XVI's misguided Regensberg comments on violence and Islam (2006), there have been some mixed messages from the Vatican on relationships with non-Christian faiths. Some of the negative attitudes are in danger of contributing to talk of a 'clash of civilizations'. Such talk has always been a serious threat to the Christians of the Middle East. While few Muslims worldwide accept the reality of this 'clash of civilizations', a small minority of Muslims in the Middle East would be ready to grasp the concept with enthusiasm. If a clash of civilizations based on religion were created, the Middle East Christians would be on the front line of conflict in every Muslim neighbourhood.

In this context of an East–West divide, the Iraqi church might be tempted to distance itself from the West and abandon its new openness, as it did under the Sasanian and later Islamic empires. This does not, however, seem plausible. Both the Chaldaean Church and, now, the Church of the East are open-minded ecclesiastical bodies with strong links with other Christians in the West. Their members in North America have embraced American values and are hardly likely to join the camp of the enemy in the clash of civilizations. In any case, it would be very sad, if, in the context of this imagined turmoil, the ecumenical achievements of the last few years, especially the rapprochement of the Church of the East on the one hand and the Chaldaean Catholic Church and the Holy See on the other, were lost.

I return finally to my first paragraph. The doctrinal barriers between the Church of the East and the Chaldaean Catholic Church are disappearing as a result of the 1994 agreement with the Vatican. A modern, post-colonial perspective on the original split between them must see it in the light of the sixteenth and nineteenth century politics of the Ottoman Empire and the West. Such political reasons do not exist and could not arise today in the twenty-first century, certainly not in the U.S. One can now, therefore, for the first time in almost 500 years, imagine a complete rapprochement between the Assyrian Church of the East and the Chaldaeans in the future. The two streams of the Church of the East could flow back together again.

Appendix

Common christological declaration between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East

His Holiness John Paul II, Bishop of Rome and Pope of the Catholic Church, and His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos-Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, give thanks to God who has prompted them to this new brotherly meeting.

Both of them consider this meeting as a basic step on the way towards the full communion to be restored between their Churches. They can indeed, from now on, proclaim together before the world their common faith in the mystery of the Incarnation.

As heirs and guardians of the faith received from the Apostles as formulated by our common Fathers in the Nicene Creed, we confess one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten of the Father from all eternity who, in the fullness of time, came down from heaven and became man for our salvation. The Word of God, second Person of the Holy Trinity, became incarnate by the power of the Holy Spirit in assuming from the holy Virgin Mary a body animated by a rational soul, with which he was indissolubly united from the moment of his conception.

Therefore our Lord Jesus Christ is true God and true man, perfect in his divinity and perfect in his humanity, consubstantial with the Father and consubstantial with us in all things but sin. His divinity and his humanity are united in one person, without confusion or change, without division or separation. In him has been preserved the difference of the natures of divinity and humanity, with all their properties, faculties and operations. But far from constituting 'one and another', the divinity and humanity are united in the person of the same and unique Son of God and Lord Jesus Christ, who is the object of a single adoration.

Christ therefore is not an 'ordinary man' whom God adopted in order to reside in him and inspire him, as in the righteous ones and the prophets. But the same God the Word, begotten of his Father before all worlds without

beginning according to his divinity, was born of a mother without a father in the last times according to his humanity. The humanity to which the Blessed Virgin Mary gave birth always was that of the Son of God himself. That is the reason why the Assyrian Church of the East is praying the Virgin Mary as 'the Mother of Christ our God and Saviour'. In the light of this same faith the Catholic tradition addresses the Virgin Mary as 'the Mother of God' and also as 'the Mother of Christ'. We both recognize the legitimacy and right-ness of these expressions of the same faith and we both respect the preference of each Church in her liturgical life and piety.

This is the unique faith that we profess in the mystery of Christ. The controversies of the past led to anathemas, bearing on persons and on formu-las. The Lord's Spirit permits us to understand better today that the divisions brought about in this way were due in large part to misunderstandings.

Whatever our Christological divergences have been, we experience our-selves united today in the confession of the same faith in the Son of God who became man so that we might become children of God by his grace. We wish from now on to witness together to this faith in the One who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, proclaiming it in appropriate ways to our contemporaries, so that the world may believe in the Gospel of salvation.

The mystery of the Incarnation which we profess in common is not an abstract and isolated truth. It refers to the Son of God sent to save us. The economy of salvation, which has its origin in the mystery of communion of the Holy Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – is brought to its fulfilment through the sharing in this communion, by grace, within the one, holy, cath-olic and apostolic Church, which is the People of God, the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Spirit.

Believers become members of this Body through the sacrament of Baptism, through which, by water and the working of the Holy Spirit, they are born again as new creatures. They are confirmed by the seal of the Holy Spirit who bestows the sacrament of Anointing. Their communion with God and among themselves is brought to full realization by the celebration of the unique offering of Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist. This communion is restored for the sinful members of the Church when they are reconciled with God and with one another through the sacrament of Forgiveness. The sacrament of Ordination to the ministerial priesthood in the apostolic succes-sion assures the authenticity of the faith, the sacraments and the communion in each local Church.

Living by this faith and these sacraments, it follows as a consequence that the particular Catholic churches and the particular Assyrian churches can recognize each other as sister Churches. To be full and entire, communion presupposes the unanimity concerning the content of the faith, the sacra-ments and the constitution of the Church. Since this unanimity for which we aim has not yet been attained, we cannot unfortunately celebrate together the Eucharist, which is the sign of the ecclesial communion already fully restored.

Nevertheless, the deep spiritual communion in the faith and the mutual trust already existing between our Churches, entitle us from now on to consider witnessing together to the Gospel message and cooperating in particular pastoral situations, including especially the areas of catechesis and the formation of future priests.

In thanking God for having made us rediscover what already unites us in the faith and the sacraments, we pledge ourselves to do everything possible to dispel the obstacles of the past which still prevent the attainment of full communion between our Churches, so that we can better respond to the Lord's call for the unity of his own, a unity which has of course to be expressed visibly. To overcome these obstacles, we now establish a Mixed Committee for theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East.

Given at Saint Peter's, on 11 November 1994
K. MAR DINKHA
IOANNES PAULUS PP. II
(*Source*: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/ chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_11111994_assyrian-church_en.html)

5 The Coptic Orthodox Church in modern Egypt

Anthony O'Mahony

The contemporary situation of the Coptic Orthodox Church has been characterized as '*Exode, exil intérieur et renouveau*' – Exodus, interior exile and renewal;[1] this evaluation recognizes that the community has undergone an unprecedented religious revival, which has had significant political consequences within the context of modern Egyptian culture and society.[2] In fact the Coptic Christian renewal has many facets in common, has marched at the same pace and echoed the revival that has taken place within the Muslim community in Egypt. Both the Christian and Muslim revivals had their immediate origins in the inter-war period, gathered pace after the end of World War II, and responded to the political crisis of 1967 with a deepening of religious and communal loyalty, which led to intensive conflict between the two communities throughout the last three decades of the twentieth century.[3] More recently we have seen religious renewal taking to maturing and broadening within society more generally, thus placing revival at the centre of Egyptian politics. These shifts in Egyptian society and culture have importance not only for Christian–Muslim relations, but also for how religion and politics will engage with each other in the public sphere.[4]

The Copts are the largest Christian community in the Middle East. Throughout Egyptian history, the Copts have largely avoided the communal isolation that has characterized some of the smaller Oriental Christian communities. Since the turn of the nineteenth century, the Coptic community has been an important and peaceful agent of cultural, economic and political change.[5] This must be set against a continuing conflict between minorities and majorities throughout the states of the region.

The well-known Egyptian commentator Muhammad H. Haykal titled a lively article he had written, on the place of Copts in Egyptian society: 'The Copts are not a minority, but an integral part of the human cultural mass of the Egyptian people'.[6] In the article Haykal protests against the fact that a congress, to be held in Cairo about the 'rights of minorities in the Arab motherland and in the Middle East' had included the Copts among these minorities on the same level as the Kurds of Iraq or the Armenians of Lebanon. A number of other writers and prominent personalities have followed Haykal in his protest, most notably Pope Shenouda III himself, the

distinguished patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church. For it is significant that the question of the rights of Copts in Egypt should have been posed within a conference on the rights of minorities, albeit against the background of confessional violence in Egypt, leading many to wonder what is the fate of Coptic Christians in this current situation. It is more significant still to see the virtual unanimity among the Copts and Muslims in their straightforward refusal to see the Copts classified among the distinct and specific minorities of the region. The Copts feel themselves, and are felt, to be primarily an integral part of Egypt, although the very fact that this is stated so insistently shows that a problem does exist.[7]

The situation in Egypt must be set against the recent political-historical context, which has been a *Calvary* for Eastern Christianity in its ancient heartlands. Hence, the relative strength and process of renewal within the Coptic community have been important witnesses for the Christian tradition in the Middle East. History has demonstrated a brutal side to Eastern Christianity in the region, which has seen long-term political changes and upheavals that have had a particular impact upon the character and stability of all the Christian communities. We have seen the break-up of the Ottoman Empire and the attendant Armenian genocide that followed during and after; the massacre and systematic displacement of Syriac Christianity in the old Ottoman territories, emigration, removal and temporary settlement in Iran and Iraq; the vastly reduced Christian presence in Turkey and near extinction of some Christian communities. The Christian heartlands of Lebanon have been devastated by the Civil War with well over one-third of Christians being displaced or going into exile and emigration; the 1948 war between Arabs and Israelis made some 60 per cent of Christian refugees from Jerusalem and the Holy Land; the Iranian Islamic revolution occurred in 1979; and the conflict in Iraq has seen the Christian community reduced from approximately a million to nearly half that number since 1991.

Christian–Muslim conflicts are, however, not recent or new phenomena in Egyptian history; various forms of political re-Islamization have increased confessional tension and resulted in an outburst of violent clashes between militant Muslims and Copts.[8] And as has already been mentioned, the Islamic revival seems to be matched by a Coptic religious renaissance and also, of particular importance in this context, a growing politicization of Coptic religious and communal identity. And although Muslims and Copts in Egypt hold many cultural and social patterns in common, the Copts (Kenneth Cragg observed):

> . . . for all their exposure to power not their own, are seen as a threat to the dominant community – an imagined threat, to be sure, yet significant nevertheless . . . They are suspected or accused of possessing hidden resources, of exercising a power beyond their numbers . . . of conspiratorial capacities.[9]

The awareness of being Copt, in as much as it is more 'spiritual' and more centred on its authenticity, highlights differentiation from Muslims. At the same time, motives that are more religious and consequently more radical and exclusive are reinforcing the claims of the Copts.[10] The spiritual development of the Coptic community appears to foster in the leaders something that, for want of a better term, may be called an 'awareness of belonging', something far richer than what existed formerly but also far more particularized and radical.[11]

The return to an Arab-Muslim heritage has a strict parallel in the return of the Christian to her/his Coptic monastic heritage.[12] The parallelism goes further: just as Western Orientalism has not been without influence in awakening an appreciation among Muslims of the sources of their heritage, so Western Patristic studies and the study and publication of sources documenting monastic life have exercised a great influence on the reawakening of the value of the spiritual heritage of Coptic Christianity within the Coptic Church itself.[13]

The Copts in history

The word Copt derives from the Greek for an inhabitant of Egypt (*Aiguptos*), arabized into '*Qibt*' and thence into 'Copt'.[14] The conversion of the ancient population of Egypt to Christianity was traditionally thought to have been begun by the evangelist St Mark.[15] During the Roman period, Egyptian Christians suffered several savage persecutions, among them that of the Emperor Diocletian in 284 AD in which thousands are said to have died. Repression did not end with the Church's support of the 'miaphysite' doctrine of the nature of Christ, which brought it into sharp conflict with Byzantium. The Coptic 'miaphysites', representing the great majority of the people, were subject to repeated persecution.[16] The traditional view has been that with this background it is not surprising that in 641 AD they might have considered the invading Arabs, not as the harbingers of a new religion, but as a welcome change of political regime, although this position needs reconsideration.[17] The initial honeymoon did not last long, as the early history of the Arabs in Egypt is marked by a series of Coptic revolts, which were suppressed with increasing severity and violence.

By the end of the ninth century, the Christians had ceased to be a majority: the decline in the proportion of Copts in the overall population continued in subsequent centuries, and may have stabilized in the early nineteenth century. In accordance with Islamic law, Copts were subject to special taxation (*al-Jizya*) according to *Dhimmi* status.[18] They suffered discrimination and occasionally violent persecution. They were compelled to wear distinctive clothing. Many rural communities lapsed over time into apostasy, partly through pastoral neglect by an institutionally weak Church. The Coptic language died out as a spoken and literary language during the Middle Ages.[19] Coptic is now used exclusively in the liturgy and in the internal

communications of the monasteries; however it has undergone a revival among some militant Coptic groups, such as the Coptic Nation Party in the 1950s and currently among some Coptic intellectuals.

A survey of the long process of the Arabization and Islamization of Egypt shows a regional distribution of Copts, who can be found in small pockets surrounded by areas where Christianity is almost non-existent or in areas with a high proportion of Christians.[20] This distribution dates back to the early conquest, when large areas were systematically cleared of Christians.[21] By the fifteenth century, the Islamization movement had come to an end, and the Coptic Church entered a long period of hibernation that was to last until the mid-nineteenth century.

From the mid-seventeenth century onwards there is a relative abundance of data on the numbers of Christians in Egypt. The various estimates are as follows: in the records of Jacque de Verona (1335) some 30,000 Christians paid tribute. Prosper Alpin in 1530 records 50,000 Christians. Dapper, 1668, records 100,000 Christians. According to Vansleb in 1673, 10,000 or at most 15,000 Copts pay tribute (in the records of the Patriarch). Benoit de Maillet in around 1700 records more than 30,000. The Jesuit Maucollet, 1710, records 40,000 Copts. Furthermore there are three figures concerning the number of Christians in Cairo only. Correspondence from the French embassy in Constantinople in 1702 mentions 40,000 Copts and 5,000–6,000 other Christians in Cairo. In 1702 also, Boucher de la Richardiere gives 24,000 Christians among 500,000 inhabitants of Cairo. Claude Sicard, in around 1720, records more than 20,000 Christians, mainly Copts.[22]

Two comments need to be made regarding these figures. First: the most reliable ones are those concerning estimates of the number of Christians 'paying tribute', which indicates either the *Jizyah* or *Kharaj*. The tribute was fixed by the region or by the village, was proportional to the number of Christian families and depended upon how wealthy they were – whereas according to Vansleb there are 10,000 or at the most 15,000 this figure in reality corresponds to the 100,000 or 150,000 Christians given by Dapper. But it will be noticed that the number of 'tributaries', that is to say the size of the Coptic community, has declined by half or two-thirds between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries. The second comment is that the highest figures turn out to be closest to the actual reality in Egypt towards the end of the eighteenth century. The low figures are based upon an estimate for the number of Christians in Cairo and for the whole of Egypt.

Cairo would have seemed to travellers one of the greatest cities in the world, with just as many if not more inhabitants then Paris, and one of its immediately striking features was its overwhelmingly Islamic appearance and the weak position of the Christian minority, which in part was not indigenous, consisting of Greeks, Armenians and Syrians. The Jesuit Sicard numbered the churches in Cairo at 20 or 25, compared with 1,140 large and small mosques.[23] Given that the route to Cairo was either by land or along the Nile through Lower Egypt where Christians are particularly thinly spread, it

is not surprising that the figures derived from the capital and applied to the whole of the country were so low.

Most of these estimates concern the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, between 1675 and around 1725 Vansleb and Sicard, two experts of Christian Egypt, allow us to gain a sufficiently detailed idea of the life of the Coptic Church. The seven surviving monasteries at which some type of monastic life existed (St Paul's monastery was still abandoned) were sparsely inhabited at the time of Vansleb. At St Antony's, there were 19 religious who were in poor shape, according to Vansleb[24] (about 15 according to Sicard), in addition to about a dozen at St Paul's.[25] Again according to Sicard, at the Wadi Natrun, a main centre for Coptic monasticism, there were only two religious and two deacons at St Macarius, four religious at Anba Bishoi, whereas Deir Souriani and Baramus had proper communities. At the end of the eighteenth century, a hand-written note commemorating the visit of the Coptic patriarch John XVIII in 1781 increased these figures considerably by putting the number of religious at Baramus at 12 and 9 respectively, plus 18 and 12 at Bishoi, and correspondingly 20 religious at St Macairus and 18 at Suriani; one might nevertheless ask if the monks included in these numbers actually lived in their monasteries.

Finally, Deir al-Muharraq seemed to be populated largely by Ethiopian monks, to the extent that it was called the monastery of the Abyssinians.[26] The total number of Coptic monks during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries thus fluctuated around only 100, and maybe even less.

Another indication of the state of the Coptic Church in Egypt is the distribution of Coptic bishoprics. At the beginning of the sixteenth century (1508), there were 18 bishoprics, of which ten were in Upper Egypt and eight north of Cairo.[27] During the time of Vansleb and Sicard, the number of bishoprics was drastically reduced both in the Delta and even in Upper Egypt.[28] By contrast, the situation of twelve bishoprics as described by Sicard at the beginning of the eighteenth century continues almost unchanged until the end of the nineteenth century.

At the time of the French Egypt expedition, Jomard estimates that in Egypt, whose total population he puts at 2,500,000 on the basis of the number of villages and the consumption of grain, the Christian and Jewish population amounts to 215–220,000. If the number of Jews is subtracted from this figure – according to Sicard, there were only about 7–8,000 of them in Cairo – and the number of Levantine Christians (mainly Greeks and Armenians) is also subtracted, the resulting number of Copts was just under 200,000. Jomard estimates that there were 10,000 Copts in Cairo; this number is probably too low given our knowledge of the early eighteenth century.[29]

After the *Description de l'Egypte*, a whole series of new estimates is found in the years 1830–1840; at 150–160,000 these figures are slightly lower than those of the beginning of the century. In 1827, Renoüard de Bussière puts the number of Copts at 160,000. In 1835, E. Lane counted 150,000 Copts, of which 10,000 in Cairo; he put the total population at 4 million. Jomard again

in 1836 counted 160,000 Copts and justifies the decline compared to the beginning of the century by referring to the depopulation of the countryside and the heavy losses of life during the wars of Muhammad ʿAli. In 1836, St John again put the number of Copts at 160,000, with 10,000 Copts in Cairo. Michaud and Poujoulat in 1838: 150,000. Clot bey, 1840: 150,000 in a total population of 3 million. Cadalvène even reduces this figure to 145,000. After 1840, the estimates rise at the same time as Egypt's demography. In 1854, Vimercati puts the figure for Copts again at 160,000, whereas Butcher, in 1855, quotes the number of 217,000 Copts, according to the Patriarchate (the *Jizyah* is abolished that same year), in a total population of 5 million. Dalfi, in 1861, provides the figure of 382,438 Christians in a total population of 4,606,160. At the end of the century, before the first official survey in 1897, the figures rise to 7–800,000 Copts in a total Egyptian population of 9–10 million.[30]

The census of 1907 found that 7.9 per cent of the population of Egypt was Christian. The four decennial censuses carried out between 1917 and 1947 reported an 8 per cent Christian population. A slight decline was found in 1960 at 7.4 per cent, which was even more pronounced in 1966 (6.6 per cent) and can be explained by the departure of many Syrian–Lebanese, Armenian and Greek Christian communities during Nasser's reign.

It is difficult to establish anything hard and fast about the number of Christians currently in Egypt. The Egyptian Government census, conducted in November 1976, reported a total of 2,315,560 Copts or 6.31 per cent of the total population. This figure met with incredulity and protests from the Copts themselves, who threatened to launch their own head count. The government dissuaded them, but Coptic sources continue to speak of a much higher figure.[31] Coptic groups outside Egypt speak of over ten million, or approximately 15–20 per cent of the total population, a figure that has gained wide currency, although it remains untested. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, which published its most recent account of the 29 September 1990, there were 56 million in Egypt of which 94.12 per cent were Muslims and only 5.87 per cent were Christians, some 3,287,200. Today most contemporary observers conservatively suggest that the Coptic Christian population numbers at least one in ten of the population.[32]

How is the Coptic community's geographical distribution in Egypt? According to the well-known study by J. D. Pennington, the Copts, though present in all areas, are in the majority in none. Over 60 per cent of them live in Upper Egypt and over half of these in the provinces of Assuyt and Minya, the Copts' traditional stronghold, and a region of intense confessional conflict. A majority of the Copts in Upper Egypt, although not of the Coptic population as a whole, are still peasants. A few villages in Upper Egypt are almost entirely Christian.

The effect of the drift to the towns has been marked among the Copts, and they form a higher proportion of the population in the towns in Upper Egypt than they do in the rural areas. On the basis of the census, again roughly 25 per cent of the Egyptian Copts live in Cairo and 6 per cent in

Alexandria. The rest are dotted around the Delta and the Suez Canal and the desert provinces, the great majority being town dwellers.[33]

A recent phenomenon in the Coptic Orthodox church is the establishment of new Coptic communities outside Egypt. Emigration of the Copts in sizable numbers started some three decades ago. Emigration from Egypt by Coptic Christians needs to be seen in the context of general Egyptian patterns. Nasser's nationalization policies in the economy also led to a number of well-to-do families leaving Egypt to settle in the West – amongst these were Coptic families. The presence abroad of economically resourceful individuals from this early phase of emigration has been important in the establishment of Coptic churches in the West that followed at a later stage. The majority of the emigrants were professionals and intellectuals, thus forming part of the Egyptian 'brain drain'. Today, the Coptic Church has several centres in Western Europe, the U.S.A., Canada, and Australia, with approximately some 500,000 members abroad today. In response to this situation the Coptic Church has sent many of its best priests, monks and scholars to serve the communities in the diaspora. After the Second World War, and particularly since 1960, the Coptic Church has established itself in other parts of Africa outside Egypt, partially as a reaction to the independence movements which favoured, according to Coptic ecclesiology, the implantation of the Coptic church, seen as the most ancient African Christian church.[34]

The ancestors of most Egyptians were at one time Copts, according to Louis Massigion; the well-known French Orientalist estimated that 95 per cent of all Egyptian Muslims were of Coptic decent, and there seems to be no racial difference between Copts and Muslims. Social separation between Copts and Muslims is upheld by a number of marriage rules, and both Copts and Muslims use social pressure to discourage mixed marriages – nevertheless, there are well-developed reciprocal social relations between the two groups. It is suggested that some thousands of Copts convert to Islam each year mainly for social or marriage reasons. Conversion to Christianity is illegal, but does occur even though it cannot be admitted, especially among Muslims in Upper Egypt, who seek to reclaim a Coptic identity, or among some intellectuals attracted by the ethical and moral values of Christianity.[35]

The Copts consider themselves as Arabs and Egyptians, and share a common history with their Muslim compatriots. In fact, Coptic identity is particularly linked with Egyptian nationalism.[36] At the same time, as a religious and cultural minority, the Copts constitute a distinct group within Egyptian society. In this respect membership of the Coptic Orthodox Church plays a crucial role. The history of the group, with its strong family cohesion and solidarity, and with its customs, beliefs and values, is profoundly rooted in the life and history of the Church. Consequently, Coptic identity is closely linked both with an awareness of a distinct history of origin and with a particular interpretation of history.

Before the Arab conquest in 641 AD, the Egyptian Christians had suffered savage persecutions, in particular under Diocletian. These events are still

commemorated in a special way: the Coptic era, 'the Era of the Martyrs', starts in the year 284 AD, the year of Diocletian's accession to the throne. The martyr cult of the Coptic Church is highly developed and easily reinterpreted, particularly today. In an interesting study on the comparison between Coptic and Muslim saints in twentieth century Egypt, Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen has shown that though both communities use specific terms for the veneration of its saints, their practices are similar. For Muslim saints, there is the Sufi impregnation, while for Coptic saints, relics and religious images are used. The Muslim *Majâdhîb* matches the Coptic 'holy fools'.

Despite some similarities, for example miracles, the reasons for their success differ: among the Copts, it is a question of reconquering a territory at a time of religious reform and renewal; for the Muslims, what is at stake is adapting to the modern world.[37]

For Coptic Christianity the link between the Egyptian Church and Christian history is particularly important. Coptic sources from the fourth to the fourteenth century mention numerous localities and incidents in the Nile delta and valley in connection with the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt. The coming of the Holy Family is an annual event of jubilation. The Cairene suburb, Zeitun, is one of the sites connected with the Holy Family, which in 1968/1969 became the scene of several apparitions of the Virgin. These visions were witnessed by thousands of people, both Christians and Muslims, and were 'officially' confirmed by the Church. The apparitions of the Virgin thus served, at a moment of common humiliation after defeat in the 1967 war with Israel, as a reminder of this particular Egyptian heritage and as a convincing witness of the continuity and the fidelity of the Church.[38]

Coptic historical awareness integrates pre- Christian Egyptian history as well. From the earliest times the Coptic Church, in its customs and rituals, has represented a particular continuity with pharaonic times. The discovery of pharaonic Egypt during the late nineteenth century had a tremendous impact on the Copts. The first generation of European Egyptologists readily identified the Copts with the ancient Egyptians. Variations of this idea still play a role in Coptic apologetic writing. In recent socio-political writings, moreover, the pharaonic origin of the Copts is quite often referred to as an ethnic reality. In this way, the Coptic self-image has continually integrated elements that confirm the awareness of an identity separate from the Muslim community, but that affirm their Egyptian identity.[39]

Coptic monasticism: renewal and revival of Christian identity in modern Egypt

'Egypt is not only the land of Christian monastic origins, but also of modern monastic revival.'[40] From the late 1960s onwards, large numbers of young Copts have retreated into the desert, reviving the ancient monasteries once founded in the fourth and fifth centuries. The monasteries have been enlarged and modernized by these new monks, many educated in schools and

universities. Modern technology and means of communication have been introduced and some of the monasteries have close relations with churches and monasteries in Europe and North America.

The Coptic monastic revival has received much comment. It reminds Western Christians of the Cistercian movement in Europe during the medieval period, which through its energy transformed the frontiers of Christendom and also introduced new agricultural techniques. The monastic revival has been sourced in the desert tradition itself, where radical hermits began to attract disciples during World War II.

However there is also a wider context. Numerous young Egyptians were disappointed with the Egyptian kingdom and its dependence on the British. Muslims rallied in movements of Islamic revival, secularized soldiers formed clandestine groups of socialists and Copts created Coptic organizations. While the older Coptic leaders were concerned with integrating their community into the nation as it was being formed and were searching, in the name of universal democratic principles, for a lay way of life that was 'liberal' (some would say 'secular'), these new groups by contrast have been concerned primarily with the life of the Coptic community. 'All authentic service begins and ends with the Church . . . has for its aim to link Christ and the community' (Matta el-Meskeen 1984).[41]

In this context some Copts left society behind and went into the desert. In the monasteries they found not only spiritual leaders, but also libraries with manuscripts containing their spiritual heritage, the writings of the radical monastic leaders of the first centuries, like St. Antony, St. Macarius and St. Isaac of Niniveh.[42] But some did not find life in the monasteries radical enough, and retreated further into the desert so as to live the life of the desert fathers of the fourth century. As Samuel Rubenson (1997) has reminded us 'Tradition is the heart of this renewal'.

The revival in Coptic monasticism has been encouraged by an unprecedented increase in monks and nuns.[43] The number of monastic institutions has multiplied to accommodate this movement. While some of the new monasteries have been fully sanctioned by the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church, others are occupied by a couple of monks, since it is the policy of the Church that many of the once abandoned and partly ruined monastic buildings should be restored and subsequently reoccupied.[44] Whereas in 1960 there were 206 Coptic monks living in nine monasteries, in 1986 it was recorded that there were 620 Coptic monks in eleven officially recognized monasteries, distributed as follows: the four celebrated ancient monasteries in Wadi Natroun: Dair al-Baramous (The Monastery of the Romans) 83; Dair as-Surian (The Monastery of the Syrians) 55; Dair Anba Bishoi (The Monastery of St. Bishoi) 115; Dair Abu Maqar (The Monastery of St. Macarius) 105. The Red Sea: Dair Anba Antonious (The Monastery of St. Antony) 45; Deir Anba Boula (The Monastery of St. Paul) 45. In Upper Egypt: Dair Anba Samwil (The Monastery of St Samuel) 46; Dair al-Muharraq (The Monastery of the Holy Virgin) 50. In the North: Dair Abu Mina (The Monastery of

St. Minas) (restored and re-founded by Patriarch Cyril IV) 30; Dair Anba Bakhum (the Monastery of Pachomius) 10; Dair Mari Girgis (The Monastery of St. George) 25.[45] The monastic establishment in 2001 numbered some 1,200, as reported by the official organ of the patriarchate, *Al-Kiraza*.[46]

The monasteries that are located in the desert are today easily accessible and large numbers of visitors from all areas and levels of the church pass through the gates. For the first time in their long history, the desert monasteries are woven into the fabric of the parish churches of the cities, towns and villages. Many of the monastic clergy are no longer spending most of their active life in the desert, but have linked themselves into the spiritual life of the Coptic community as a whole. To join a monastery, for many young Coptic men, means the total identification of the person with the Church. This is an important witness in a situation where the Church represents the faith of a religious minority. Others embrace the monastic life as a sign of protest against the laxity and the worldliness of the 'Church' and society.

Whilst difficult to assess, it would seem that the ascetic disciplines practised today are considerably more severe than in recent generations. The monks have adopted quite a strict rule: that of Saint Pachomian, involving isolation within their cells outside the office, and manual works. The higher ranks of the Coptic clergy are selected from the ranks of the monks. Some may join the monastic life out of a desire for an eventual leadership role within the community. Many of the young bishops in the Coptic Orthodox Church today are themselves products of this monastic revival.

The spiritual character of the monasticism thus has a direct influence on the shape of the Coptic Church. In fact different monasteries at various times have provided the church with its patriarchs. Thus, for example, from the seventh to the thirteenth century 25 out of 36 patriarchs were former monks of Dair Abu Maqer in the Wadi Natroun. From the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, ten of the twelve patriarchs came from Dair Anba Antonious monastery. In the middle of the twentieth century, 16 bishops have served as monks in the Dair as-Surian. Under Shenouda, his home monastery Dair Anba Bishoi has provided numerous monks for appointment to the episcopate.

During the patriarchate of Shenouda III numerous new monasteries have been established: all these new monasteries, except for those created for the Coptic community living in the diaspora and mission areas (Australia, North America, Europe for example in Italy, Germany and England and in Africa the Sudan, Kenya and Zimbabwe),[47] are reoccupied ancient monastic sites, abandoned over the centuries. The establishment of monasteries outside Egypt (excepting Jerusalem) is a new and important development in the modern trajectory of Coptic Christianity, as this represents a historical turning outwards to the Christian West and a contribution to the Christianization of much of sub-Saharan Africa that happened during the twentieth century.[48]

The renewal within the Coptic Church is a product of a wide range of forces, but has been identified above all with significant individuals who personified the monastic spirituality and leadership that is at the heart of this

movement – Patriarch Cyril VI (1902–1971), Patriarch Shenouda III (1971–) and the monk Matta el Meskeen. The two monks who became patriarchs gave institutional strength, structure and meaning to the monastic renewal. Edward Watkin observed in his appraisal of Cyril VI: 'Not only has a monk become a patriarch, but the Patriarch has remained a monk.'[49] The third, Matta el Meskeen, is not only a spiritual author, he is also the cornerstone of the extraordinary renewal of the monastery of Dair Abu Maqar in Wadi el-Natroun, in the Scete Desert; he is a major figure in the monastic renewal that the Coptic Orthodox Church has been undergoing since the 1950s.

Reform and renewal in the modern Coptic Church – monastic trajectories

On 24 February 1928, at the end of his noviciate year, Azer Youssef Atta, the future Patriarch Cyril VI, made his monastic profession at Dair al Baramus in Wadi el Natroun taking the name Mina el Baramoussi.[50] He was born 26 years earlier on 2 August 1902 in the Delta.[51] During the first half of the twentieth century, Coptic monastic life was going through a dark period in its history, however, the Dair al Baramus monastery seemed to be showing seeds of renewal. At Dair al-Surian, Dair Anba Bishoi and Dair Abu Maqar, life was extremely precarious; the residents of these monasteries were often forced into asceticism among their crumbling buildings. But at Dair al Baramus, with buildings 'in a slightly better state', there were still remarkable people at that time. The Ethiopian hermit Abd al Masih al-Habashi; a true desert father, lived three miles from the monastery in caves, with neither bed nor door, for, he said, 'a jackal needs no door'.[52] He was a 'real source of inspiration' for the young Mina el Baramoussi. Before leaving his cave to die in 1973, en route to the Holy Land,[53] this man would also influence the future Patriarch Shenouda III and Matta el Meskeen. Another person at Dair al Baramus was Michael el Zerbawy, who also knew Matta el Meskeen. He lived as a recluse in a cell, according to the original tradition of desert monasticism. But there were also the first monks from the universities, such as Abdel Messih Salib el Baramoussi (1848–1935), a polyglot and a scholar.

It was thus in an ascetic, spiritual and intellectual environment that Mina el Baramoussi led his monastic life. He was ordained priest in 1931 and sent to seminary to finish his studies, where he impressed Patriarch Joseph II, who observed that he wanted to consecrate him as bishop. Mina fled to Deir abou Shenouda at Sohag, but obediently returned to submit himself to the counsels of his elders. They finally allowed him to remain a monk as he wished. He retired to a cave for four years (1932–1936).[54] In 1944 or 1945 at Dair Anba Samwil, in the Qalamon desert he became the monastery superior, undertaking the restoration of the monastic buildings, the church and some caves.

During these years, the student Christian environment was marked by the 'Sunday School' movement, founded in 1918 by the Archdeacon of St Mark's Cathedral, Habib Girgis (1876–1951). The Sunday Schools, based on a

Protestant model, offered a biblical and liturgical catechesis to all, and invited them to make a concrete commitment.[55] Many students took part in teaching alongside clergy and lay people. It is not surprising that the future Shenouda III, Matta el Meskeen and Anba Samuel were all linked to this movement.

Nazir Gayyed Raphail, the future Patriarch Shenouda, was born on 3 August 1923 into a middle-class family in Sallam in the Assyut (Upper Egypt region). He had an MA in English from the University of Cairo, having already obtained a BA in history, and was a student at the Egypt Archaeological Institute and a professor attached to the Egyptian Ministry of Education and Teaching. He also taught in the Sunday Schools. Youssef Scandar (or Iskandar), the future Matta el Meskeen, was born in 1919 in Benha in the Delta, and was also a member of the Sunday School movement, while studying pharmacy at the start of his professional career. Saad Aziz, the future Anba Samuel, was born in 1920 and had an MA in law from the University of Cairo, with a BA in theology and pedagogy. He would later complete an MA at Princeton University.

Along with many others, these three brilliant students were close to Mina el Baramoussi, who guided each of them to the monastery. In 1948 Mina el Baramoussi consecrated the young Saad Aziz and Youssef Scandar as monks in Dair Anba Samuel, his own monastery. Saad Aziz received his monastic consecration and the name of Samuel at the church of St Mina in Old Cairo on 17 April 1948. He would only remain for a few months at Dair Anba Samuel, eventually going to Dair as-Surian. He took the name Macarius el Souriani. From there, he again took up a certain number of social activities in Cairo.

Youssef Scandar sold his pharmacy during May and distributed the income to the poor in order to join Mina el Baramoussi. Refusing a celebration in St Mina, in the city, he was consecrated on 10 August at the monastery itself, along with three other monks. Each received the name of an evangelist, and from that day Youssef was Matta el Samouily.

Although he was officially the superior of the monastery, Mina el Baramoussi did not often live there, preferring his parochial activities at St Mina, and he wanted the novice Matta el Samouily to join him in Cairo; but Matta el Samouily resisted, leading to a coolness in their relationship. However, el Samouily took advantage of his time to read and write. In addition to meditating on the Scriptures and the Fathers especially Antony, Macarius, John Climacus, Isaac the Syrian, he drew from a selection of prayer put together by a British Orthodox monk, Laazar Moore. He thus soon grew to know, in addition to the Fathers, the holy men of Byzantium and Russia, Symeon the New Theologian, Seraphim of Sarov, Ignatius Briantchaninov, John of Kronstadt.

It was also during his early days in monastic life that he drew up the first version of *The Orthodox way of prayer* (*Hayat al-Salat al-Urthudhusksiya*),[56] initially a collection of notes. Matta el Smouily had a spiritual experience of mystical union with Christ and communion with the souls of the saints. He

was deeply marked by the spiritual figure of Abraham. But it seems that nights of vigil affected his health and in March 1951 his friend Ragheb Moftah, during a visit to Deir Amba Samuel, convinced him to go to Cairo to be examined. It was then, while visiting his superior Mina el Baramoussi, that he was asked to leave his monastery briefly for that of Dair as-Surian.

Hardly had he arrived at Dair as-Surian on the vigil of the feast of Holy Cross (19 March 1951) (Mina el Baramoussi having already agreed with Anba Theophilos, the superior of the monastery), than Matt el Samouily was ordained priest. To distinguish him from the monk Matteos, he received the name Matta el Meskeen, referring to the founder of a monastery at Aswan at the start of the eighth century. He was given permission to live in a cave 40 minutes from the monastery. It was at this time that he met the Dair al Baramous hermits, Abd al Masih al Habashi and Michael el Zerbawy.

Mina el Baramoussi's decision was not arbitrary. Since 1950, under the influence of some university-educated monks, Dair as-Surian had been in the midst of reform. Three years earlier, he had already sent the young monk Samuel to the same monastery. Anba Theophilos, the superior, had agreed that the young monks might strictly observe St Pachomius' rule, without the elder ones being subject to it. The reform of Dair as-Surian, which united common life, work and obedience, gave rise to much interest at the time in western monastic circles. Intellectual work was at the heart of the changes there was a printing press and library there, and it was open to the West and to patristic studies. In 1961, Dair as-Surian had 45 monks, 25 of whom were reformed.

Very quickly, Matta el Meskeen, aged only 32, became the spiritual father to a group of disciples. Several monks who had access to their master's notes on the *Orthodox life of prayer* obtained permission from Anba Theophilus to publish it from the monastery printing press. This first edition in 1952 was prefaced by Nazir Gayyed, still a student in Cairo. Elected to the chair of theology at the Helwan seminary in 1953, he subsequently became a monk at Dair as-Surian in 1954. He received the name of Antony el Souriani, and took charge of the library.

In 1954, Dair el Surian was influential despite the small number of resident monks (a dozen): Macaire el Souriani for the first time represented the Coptic Orthodox Church at the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Evanston,[57] and Patriarch Joseph II asked the monastery superior to give him Matta el Meskeen as his patriarchal vicar in Alexandria.

At a national level, Nasser the Arab nationalist and socialist imposed agrarian reform in 1954, which took lands and other property away from monasteries. Dair al-Muharraq, for example, lost about 1,500 hectares. In 1955 the *Majilis Milli* (Community Councils) lost most of their prerogatives to state tribunals. Unfortunately the Patriarchate was weakened by internal conflict. From 1952 until his death in 1956, Patriarch Joseph II was caught between reformist and conservative currents. The questions at stake were about the management of monastic property and the reform of the Church.

In 1955 Joseph II was deposed by the Holy Synod and exiled. He left on 22 September, but on 28 November, the Ethiopian Synod confirmed its attachment to him.[58] The confusion reached its peak when on 7 June 1956, 16 Coptic and 14 Ethiopian bishops unanimously re-established Joseph II to his See; while on the other hand the interim Patriarchal committee, meeting on 20 June at Dair al Muharraq, proclaimed itself the only legitimate author-ity and provoked the start of a schism. With the intervention of Nasser, the *Majilis Milli* was dissolved on 4 July, which led to new elections.

The new general *Majilis Milli* confirmed the reformers' position on 11 August: the Patriarchal Committee then directed business, but could neither ordain bishops nor inaugurate structural reforms. 'Providentially', Joseph II died on 13 November after a short stay in hospital, so the Church could proceed with the election of a new patriarch. However, during these difficult years in the Coptic Church, the monastic scene had also changed.

Matta el Meskeen: the spirituality of monastic renewal[59]

In 1955 Matta el Maskeen was in charge of the Patriarchal Vicariate in Alexandria. His sermons, fed from his experience in the desert, and the many reforms that he carried out, soon brought him opponents, particularly among the bishops. There were attempts to dismiss him, and Matta el Meskeen decided to leave his post to return to Dair as-Surian, refusing to 'exhaust his priestly life in vain fights to establish a true reform undermined by those around Joseph II'. But on his return to Dair as-Surian, Matta el Meskeen and his group appeared to have problems integrating into the community and the superior countermanding his advice, he gave contradictory orders and emphasised his right to ordain monks to the priesthood.

Forbidding his disciples to follow him, Matta el Meskeen eventually left Dair as-Surian in July 1956. However, the same day, the followers also left the monastery, guided by Antony el Souriani, to be with their spiritual father. On Mina el Baramoussi's advice they went to Dair Anba Samwil, which was completely dilapidated. The monks immediately began to rebuild a chapter room and cells according to the traditional style. Matta el Meskeen was the spiritual father of the group, and Mina el Baramoussi the superior.[60]

When Joseph II died in 1956, Matta el Meskeen was at Dair Anba Samwil, and Antony el Souriani had returned to a life of asceticism and study in a cave two miles from Deir as-Surian. It was also at this time that Matta el Maskine supported the new endeavour *Bayt al-takris li-khidmat al-Kiraz* (House of the consecration), founded by lay disciples in Helwan (1958–1959). This was an original community of seven monks and seven lay people, whose life followed a strict rule – silence, fasting, prayer, study – and who refused any external apostolate.[61]

After the Patriarchal elections, between 17 and 19 April 1959, Mina el Baramoussi was eventually consecrated Patriarch of Alexandria, taking the name of Cyril VI. This was not without benefits for his former disciples: from

1959 he had Antony el Souriani and Macaire el Souriani as his secretaries. But the same did not go for Matta el Meskeen. In January 1960 he asked the new superior at Dair Anba Samwil to allow him and his group to leave. The monks went to the new Patriarch who sent them back to Dair as-Surian but the same frictions arose and, after only two months, Matta el Meskeen asked the superior once again to let them go. On 9 April 1960, with the agreement and blessing of the superior, they left Dair as-Surian for a second time.

The Patriarch wanted the monks to split up to go to several monasteries and leave Cairo within 24 hours. The Bishop of Menoufia, Anba Benyamin, who felt this was unjust, offered them his blessing and an altar stone (of consecrated wood) to authorise them to celebrate the liturgy freely. On 10 August, the group left to move initially to Wadi el Rayan, near the cave of St Samuel the Confessor near Dair Anba Samwil. Here they established an ascetic life according to the tradition of the first monastic movement and continued to study the writings of the Fathers.[62]

On 23 August, the journal *Al Ahram* spread the news that Patriarch Cyril VI, 'on the occasion of the promulgation of decrees about the Coptic Waqfs,[63] has published a decree calling for monks to return to their monasteries before the end of September.'[64] On the one hand, this decree can be understood to express a desire for general monastic reform, on the other hand it may have been particularly addressed to the Wadi el Rayan group. Cyril VI was strongly attached to monastic reform, as a necessary element in the overall renewal of the Coptic Church. But this did not mean that he wished to bless the 'new monastic flowering' of Wadi el Rayan. It is likely that Cyril VI wished to impose the reform of Dair el Surian as the model for all monasteries, so it was important that dissidents, whether they were decadent or over-zealous, should submit.

The following 17 October, when Matta el Meskeen's group had still not complied, Cyril VI announced that they had been 'reduced to the lay state'. However the monks, affected by the bad water, were regretfully forced to leave Wadi el Rayan and briefly stayed at Helwan. During 1961, their situation was precarious: they made several attempts at a foundation in the Ghomeir desert near Helwan, then to the west of Alexandria. They seemed to have come to a negotiated settlement with the patriarchate when on 16 July 1962 the monks returned to Wadi el Rayan, where they remained until 1969.

In 1962, Cyril VI continued his reforming work of the Church, raising Antony el Souriani and Macaire el Souriani to the episcopate, under the respective names of Anba Shenouda, in charge of religious education and priestly formation, and Anba Samuel, in charge of social and ecumenical affairs.[65] Cyril VI's policy on monastic reform was successful and some 150 monks returned to their monasteries. But their figures rose substantially from the 1970s, mostly thanks to many recruits to monastic life.

On 8 May 1969, Patriarch Cyril VI, feeling himself to be aging, had Matta el Meskeen and his monks called and, in the presence of Anba Mikhail,

Metropolitan of Assyut, asked for their forgiveness for the wrongs done to them in the past years. Then he begged them to rebuild the monastery of Dair Abu Maqar, and, blessing Matta el Meskeen, he encouraged him to make the Scete desert blossom again.

The next day, 9 May the group went to the door of the venerable monastery, which held the tombs of the 16 Patriarchs and, it had been said for centuries, relics of St John the Baptist and the Prophet Elijah. Dair Abu Maqar then had no more than six elderly monks, living in buildings threatened by ruin or burial by sand. Immediately Matta el Maskine undertook rebuilding work, starting with the guest hostel, while welcoming the many novices who did not delay in flocking there. The entry conditions that he had drawn up were as follows: that the postulant should have 'felt his heart beat with love for God at least once, and that he answered the question, "do you love the Lord?" and "do you feel that Jesus loves you?" ' Under this direction the monastery went from 18 to 80 monks in the space of ten years.[66]

Matta el Meskeen worked tirelessly to establish the monastery, but without taking into consideration any objections or fears regarding the community's financial means; however, from 1969, providence never failed. Occupied with the work of the monastery, the spiritual father was still available for his monks. During the night he gave himself over to prayer and to writing his works: 'If I do not share with others what the Lord has given me, I have the distinct interior feeling that I am dishonestly keeping to myself what belongs by right to others.' Thus he wrote 'Coptic monasticism in the time of St. Macarius' (*Al-Rahbana al-Qibitiyya fi ʿAsr al-Qiddis Anba Maqar*: 880 pages), part of which had already been written at Wadi el Rayan; 'The Eucharist and the Mass', *Al-Afkharistiya wa al-Quddas* (1977, 764 pages), a monumental study mostly written during the five months he spent in a cave in 1972; 'St Athanasius the Apostolic', *Al-Qiddis Athanasiyus al-Rasuli* (1981, 768 pages). Matta el-Meskeen went on to write a number on commentaries on the Bible – *Al-Madkhal l'-Sharah Injil al-Qiddis Yuhanna* (Introduction a Commentary on the Gospel of St. John) (1989), *Sharah Injil al-Qiddis Yuhanna* Volumes 1–2 (A Commentary on the Gospel of St. John) (1990), *Al-Qiddis Bulus al-Rasul* (St. Paul, the Apostle) (1992), and *Sharah Risalat al-Qiddis Bulus al-Rasuli ila Ahli Rumiya* (A Commentary on the Letter of the Romans) (1992). In contrast to much earlier Coptic theological literature, they are well based on solid studies of the patristic literature, and show a growing knowledge of and critical discussion based on Western theological research.[67]

Matta el Meskeen also went on to make some significant contributions to ecclesiology and ecumenical theology. He was highly critical of the ecumenical movement but reassessed his position in later years, which allowed for a monastic opening and dialogue to take place.[68]

On 9 March 1971, Cyril VI died following a heart attack. Matta el Meskeen was nominated among the candidates for election, but objections from members of the hierarchy led the commission to remove his 'candidacy'. In the

end it was Anba Shenouda who, despite Anba Samuel's receiving more votes,[69] became the 117th successor to St Mark. He was enthroned on 14 November 1971.

Dair Abu Maqar thus kept its spiritual director and continued its work of restoration. In 1976, faced with an influx of novices, new cells had to be built. The same year, part of the church was restored and venerable relics were found of St John the Baptist and Elijah. At that time the monastery had obtained 130 hectares from the government and built a farm. A central kitchen provided meals for the 200 workers in the monastery, the 50 usual visitors in the hostel, and up to a thousand pilgrims and day-tourists. The workers also had a dispensary with doctor, dentist and pharmacy. The publishing house, 'St Macarius', published, among other things, the writings of Matta el Meskeen (more than 40 books and 200 articles), and a spirituality magazine for young people: *Morqos*. Finally, the monastery had links with numerous abbeys worldwide, and many foreign monks stayed there.[70]

With 60 monks in 1978, preparation for the future became urgent: more than 150 cells were under construction. In fact, in 1983, the monastery already had nearly 120 monks, and 400 workers. That year, Dair abu Maqar had increased its surface area by six times from 1969; hundreds of hectares had been reclaimed from the desert, now allowing the monastery to live in self-sufficiency. More than 100 monks – doctors, teachers, farmers, architects, engineers – lived in individual cells in groups of six and designed in a way that avoided the inconveniences of noise, each cell having a small office, a bedroom a kitchenette and a bathroom.

Masters of their own timetable, in agreement with their spiritual father, they led a community life that still had a certain anchorite dimension to it. During free time, or for long periods of time, they could retire to the desert hermitages. Thus to maintain the radical nature of monastic life, Matta el Meskeen had had hermitages built, of which a dozen were available at that time. As with Dair as- Sorian in the 1950s, the way of life led by the Coptic monks of Dair Abu Maqar attracted many foreign monks, for often quite long periods of study.[71]

During these years, from 1981 to 1985, Shenouda III, under house arrest by the state, lived in the neighbouring monastery of Dair Anba Bishoi. In 1981, Anba Samuel had been killed in the attack on President Sadat. Shenouda III and Matta el Meskeen are undoubtedly the greatest contemporary figures in the Coptic Orthodox Church, however their personal relationship has not always been amicable.

In 1981 President Sadat sent Shenouda into house arrest in his monastery and wished to depose him, Matta el Meskeen was the privileged interlocutor of the Egyptian President. It was even said that he had been begged by him to replace the Patriarch, which Matta had formally refused, arguing that Coptic tradition did not allow someone to become Patriarch while the office-holder was still alive.

The difficult relationship has also been attributed to the fairly independent nature of the monastery under the leadership of Matta el Meskeen.[72] For example, the idea that the monastery could be a stepping-stone to an episcopal career was rejected there. Few monks were ordained priest – perhaps 20, two-thirds of whom never celebrated the liturgy, the others taking turns to serve the monastery only. This was one of the principles of Matta el Meskeen's group, which they defended in the 1956 and 1960 crises at Dair as-Surian.[73]

But beyond political difficulties, the monastery of Dair Abu Maqar continued its development. In 1993, with the influx of parish pilgrimages, and wishing to protect the silence and recollection of monks, the monastery built a new external hostel. Since then the monastery has continued to develop: at the end of summer 1997, 100 cells that had been under construction since 1985 complemented the 120 already completed.

Matta el Meskeen passed over the spiritual direction of the younger monks and novices to other members of the community. From 1987 until 1999, he spent most of his time in the dependent house of the monastery some 70 km west of Alexandria. There he rediscovered the calm of his first monastic years, and gave his time to writing three great commentaries on Scripture. He died on 6 June 2006.

One surprising element in this overview of the monastic renewal in the modern history of the Coptic Church is the importance and the weakness of 'filiation' from the elders of the Dair al Baramus monastery to Matta el Meskeen through the person of Mina el Baramoussi who became Cyril VI. Despite the conflict that seemed to oppose the young monk early on, for reasons of personality and understanding of monastic life, Cyril remained the determining factor of the monastic trajectory of Matta el Meskeen. We should add that Matta el Meskeen was doubtless not an easy person, and that he more or less always broke with successive patriarchs, from Joseph (1946–1956), and Cyril VI (1959–1971), even though the latter, towards the end of his life, called him to leave his solitude at Wadi Rayan and to become spiritual father to the monastery of Dair Abu Maqar in 1969. Spiritually, Matta el Meskeen was independent, which allowed him to resist the pressures exerted on him on numerous occasions, while giving constant proof of his obedience and availability.

Certainly Cyril VI's desire for reform, the witness given by the Dair as-Surian community, nourished by the Sunday School students, and the life and work of Matta el Meskeen all contributed in their own way to an impressive renewal.[74]

With the growth of the presence of Coptic Christian in the West, it might now be imagined again in historical terms that a monastic interchange will allow renewed dialogue to take place, in which the Christian church can find its strength in unity.[75]

The Coptic Church since the election of Shenouda III as Patriarch

The election of Shenouda III as Patriarch also coincided with a change in political regime, with the death of Nasser and the election of Sadat. Shenouda attempted to provide the Coptic community with a Church that is not only capable of defending the interests of the community within Egyptian political life and society, but also a Church that would support and nourish the spiritual needs of the community, and by extension the religious culture and civil society of Egypt.

The Coptic Church possesses a strongly popular character, and this was clearly evident in the election procedure.[76] The first step was to publish a list of nine candidates: this was drawn up in June 1971 by a special electoral commission of nine bishops and nine laymen under the chairmanship of the *locum tenens*. The list was printed in the daily press and fixed to the door of all bishoprics, so that the faithful could take note and if they wished, raise objections. The list consisted of six bishops and three priest-monks. Another commission was responsible for drawing up the list of electors. There were 700 of these, 40 of them representatives of the Church of Ethiopia, reflecting the strong historical and doctrinal ties between the two churches.

On 29 October the electors chose by ballot three out of the remaining five candidates: of Anba Samuel (440 votes), Anba Shenouda (433) and Fr Timotheos (306). On 31 October the final choice was made by lot. The three names were placed in a casket before the beginning of the liturgy, and this was sealed and deposited on the altar. Before the distribution of communion, the deacons selected one of the young boys present in the congregation, who was given communion and had a special prayer recited over him. At the end of the service he was blindfolded and drew one of the lots from the casket. This bore the name of Anba Shenouda.

Thus on 31 October 1971, Anba Shenouda was elected head of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt, in succession to Patriarch Cyril VI who had died on the 9 March 1971. He is the 117th Patriarch in the Coptic line of succession to the throne of St Mark.

Anba Shenouda was born in 1923, in a village in the region of Assiut in Upper Egypt. He received a degree in English from the University of Cairo in 1947 and continued with advanced studies at the Egyptian Institute of Archaelogy. In 1948 he took part in the Palestinian war as an infantry officer. In 1949 he received the theological diploma from the Coptic seminary in Cairo, and was then appointed to teach there. He withdrew in 1954 to the monastery of Dair al-Suriani at Wadi Natrun, and was ordained priest there in the following year.

He came under the influence of an Ethiopian ascetic who had come to live in the Egyptian desert. The Ethiopian Abuna ʿabd al-Masih al-Habashi had inhabited a cave since 1935 some three miles south of the monastery of Dair al-Baramus in the Wadi al-Natrun, and lived by an extreme asceticism. His

consistent fasting and long vigils in some ways even surpassed the austerity of his fifth century models, and left a lasting impact upon many monks in the Coptic Church, in particular Shenouda. His predecessor as Patriarch, Cyril VI, called him from the monastery in 1959 to become one of his secretaries and in 1962 he was consecrated bishop, with special responsibility for religious education and the direction of the seminary. Shenouda was part of that generation of Coptic monastic clergy who would profoundly associate itself with the need for internal spiritual and structural reform.

Shenouda has pointed out on a number of occasions that he would like to see the Church today as strong as in the days of the fifth and sixth centuries. This goal explains many of the structural developments that are so evident in recent years within the Coptic Church.

During his time as Patriarch, Shenouda has developed the episcopate of the church. In 1971 there were 23 bishops, in 2001 there are 49. For the diaspora the number of bishops has increased from three to 19. References to the monastic origin of the hierarchs explain the degree of importance and the significance that the respective monasteries have at a given time. Thus, for example, from the seventh to the thirteenth century, 25 out of 36 patriarchs were formerly monks from St. Macarius in the Wadi Natroun. From the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, ten of the twelve patriarchs came from St. Antony's monastery. In the middle of the twentieth century, 16 bishops served as monks in the Dair as-Surian. Under Shenouda, his home monastery Dair Anba Bishoi has provided numerous monks for appointment to the episcopate.

In 1971 there were approximately 200 monks, in 2001 there are some 1,200, as reported in the official organ of the Patriarchate, *Al-Kiraza*, located in the nine historic monasteries and twelve new monasteries that have reoccupied ancient monastic sites abandoned many centuries ago.[77]

The major characteristic of the Coptic revival is a renewed emphasis on the monastic and ecclesial traditions.[78] This is realized in more frequent celebrations of the Eucharist, stress on the Church's identity as an Apostolic church, renewed emphasis on the study of the Coptic language, commemoration of the glorious past, on Egypt as the homeland of monasticism, reading of the Church Fathers, and upholding martyrdom, even in the present day.

At the same time, the Church has attempted to restore the practice of certain sacraments, which were beginning to decline, such as the sacrament of reconciliation, or fasting, particularly honoured in the Coptic religious tradition. This practice lends itself to be used as instrument of political protest; at the instigation of the patriarch the entire community may thus give a silent but spectacular sign of protest. Shenouda made use of this device on several occasions during disagreements with the political authorities. By emphasizing public prayer and fasting, the religious authorities did not only intend to strengthen the faith but also wanted to provide the Christian community with modes of expression and of action close to those used by the Muslim community.

Furthermore, the Coptic Church stresses family life and strives to draw groups from different social strata, ages and levels of education into the Church system. Hence there are groups for women, youth, and different age groups for children, university students, young couples and the like. Service to the Church and a social life that rallies around the church has become central for most Copts.[79]

The controversial question of building churches is traditionally one that divides the hawks and the doves in the Coptic community. Due to the influx of peasants to the cities and the general problem of population growth, the need to construct churches is strongly felt. It is current practice that a set number of new churches may be built within Egypt each year, and that each new building requires a presidential decree of authorisation.

The regulations concerning church buildings are strict: before qualifying for a presidential permit the church site is required not to be situated beside a Mosque, a major square or any government building. The congregation for which the church is to be built should also have the permission of local Sheikhs and Muslim leaders. Obviously, several of these conditions are difficult to fulfil, especially if the Muslim population objects and builds a Mosque beside the area pointed out as a church site. In 1972, Muslims set fire to an 'illegal' church in Khanka. A committee set up in the aftermath of the incident concluded that of the 1,442 Coptic churches, only 500 had permits. For this reason some of the major clashes between Coptic and Muslim groups during the last decades were centred on the question of legal and illegal churches.[80]

These efforts at reviving Christianity inside Egypt corresponded with initiatives to increase its influence outside. After showing its evangelizing dynamism during the first centuries, the Patriarchate of Alexandria withdrew into itself after the Muslim conquest. Shenouda has not really turned things upside down, but nevertheless has given Egyptian Christianity a certain missionary impetus in the only direction allowed, given the restrictions imposed by Islam: that is, towards Africa. Aware of the fact that the Patriarchate of Alexandria has been the first and largest Christian Church on the continent, Shenouda as early as 1976 appointed a bishop for African affairs.

As first head of the Coptic Church to undertake trips abroad, he went to Ethiopia, Sudan, Zaire and Kenya; he welcomed in Cairo the representatives of the African churches. The Coptic Church has been involved in creating an independent ecclesiastical structure in Eritrea in opposition to Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Until the agreement between Haile Salessie and the Patriarch of Alexandria, the Head of the Ethiopian church had been a Copt for many centuries.[81]

The Coptic Church in Egypt has experienced a profound change during the modern era. From a church seeking only to survive, it now experiences something that echoes its past, revival, renewal and evangelization. However, whilst this has been an expression of the Church in Egypt, where Islam dominates the public sphere, it has internalized this renewal somewhat into

monastic space, which the entire community inhabits. But the Coptic community now also finds itself spread across the world as a diaspora church due to emigration. As an ancient Church of Africa it also attempts to be part of the continent's future outside the influence of Islam, not only in its most recent sphere of ecclesial influence, Ethiopia and now Eritrea, but also as a dynamic and evangelizing Church across eastern, western and southern Africa.

6 The Armenian Church in the contemporary Middle East

John Whooley

Introduction

In this study, the term 'Middle East' will be used to refer to that region where the modern states of Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel, Iraq, and Iran are to be found. All but the last of these are within the ancient Fertile Crescent that also includes Palestine: at present, a 'state-in-waiting'. This region is now almost totally Muslim and all but Iran and Israel are Arab in culture. Cyprus, Turkey and the Arabian Gulf will also be touched upon.

Though the matter in hand deals with the contemporary situation of the Armenian Church in the Middle East, that situation can only be properly understood by taking into account the Armenian *kaghutnair* ('colonies') already in existence in the region before certain tragic events occurred in parts of the Ottoman Empire during the First World War. In addition, something of the dynamics of the communities that developed in that area after that conflict, as well as the political and economic instability of the region, both before and after the Second World War, need to be considered. The position and influence of the catholicosate of Etchmiadzin in Armenia can by no means be ignored, being an important, though perhaps an indirect, factor in understanding the Armenian communities in the Middle East in modern times. However, as an attempt at clarification we will deal first with the general political and social context in which the Armenian Church found and finds itself, and with which it has had to come to terms, and then, secondly, with a number of matters specifically and directly concerned with the Church itself. Inevitably, there will be cross-referencing, since it may be said that the fortunes of the Church cannot really be easily distinguished from those of the Armenian 'nation' itself. Finally, there is given a fairly lengthy summary of the whole matter under consideration, bearing in mind, however, that not all factors pertinent to it can be dealt with here.

I Context

The 'colonies'

Before the 1914–1918 conflict, there were a number of Armenian communities to be found scattered throughout the Middle East, some of them of no mean size or age.[1] Indeed, it could be argued that their presence was such that they formed part of the natural order of things: they had made, after all, a recognized cultural and economic contribution to that very order. 'From the beginning, Asia Minor, Greater Syria, Cyprus and Egypt were part of the Armenian habitat, and in the eyes of ordinary Arabs, Armenians were not alien elements. On the contrary, they were part of the society in different capacities and in general looked upon as part of the Islamic world.'[2] We may point, for example, to Egypt where, under the Fatimid dynasty (968–1169), Armenians had noticeably prospered, as they were to do again under the regime of Mohammed Ali (1805–1849), the former case being perhaps due to the presence of certain personalities of Armenian origin connected to the dynasty,[3] whereas, with the latter, Armenians proved to be useful in the bureaucracy of the more western-oriented government system being introduced by Mohammed Ali and continued by his descendants, the *khedives*.[4] Indeed, in 1876, Nubar Nubarian (1825–1899) was to become the first Prime Minister of Egypt and he served three terms in that capacity.[5] Yet, despite this 'intimacy' with the Arab world, Armenians have remained, at least for those who have not become assimilated, quite aware of being separate from both Islam and '*l'arabité*' that surrounds them.[6]

By the beginning of the First World War, the Armenian population in Egypt, largely concentrated in Cairo and Alexandria, was approximately 13,000 and appeared to be flourishing.[7] However, according to Bournoutian, 'The majority of the Armenian communities in the Arab lands were in a state of decline by the end of the nineteenth century.'[8] He names the most important 'colonies' of the Middle East at that time as Aleppo, Alexandria, Baghdad, Basra, Beirut, Cairo, Damascus, Jerusalem, Mosul, and Nicosia.[9] The comparatively wealthy community in Egypt was understood to have been the most influential in the region, and remained so until the revolution of 1952, to be succeeded in that capacity, it is generally agreed, by the community in Lebanon that itself had long been the most numerous.[10] The community in Iran was also numerous, being by 1979 approximately 250,000.[11]

A well-established, and perhaps one of the most documented 'colonies', is that of Jerusalem, a city which attracted considerable Armenian attention after the conversion of their kingdom to Christianity at the beginning of the fourth century. Pilgrims began to travel to the Holy Land to visit the sites associated with the life of Christ, some, indeed, staying permanently. Monasteries were soon established that were also meant to help accommodate such pilgrims from the homeland and, to this day, the Armenian Quarter, which centres itself around the most important as well as the only

remaining one of those monasteries in Jerusalem, that of St. James, is a promi-nent feature of the Old City. The Armenian Apostolic Church, due to this historical presence, became, almost instinctively, one of the three Christian bodies that the Ottoman authorities formally recognized and charged, under the Status Quo Agreement of 1852, to have official care of the Holy Places, the other two being the Greek and Roman Churches.[12]

Aspects of the political background

The history of the Armenians is notable for the suffering that they, as a people, have been subjected to throughout many centuries, due particularly to the geographic position of their homeland and to the Christian faith to which many Armenians remained loyal. By the beginning of the sixteenth century the traditional heartlands of Armenia,[13] as well as most of the Armenian communities in the Middle East, were to be dominated by the new great Muslim power of the region, namely the Ottoman, whilst the Safavids (1501–1732) were to control Iran.[14] Their rivalry was to lead to constant tension and warfare, sharpened by their opposing interpretations of Islam, Sunni and Shi'ite respectively, warfare often played out in Armenian-populated areas.

However, by the middle of the nineteenth century, these two empires had long dampened their mutual hostility, being themselves not only exhausted by this and other conflicts, but by being finally overshadowed by the militarily and industrially confident Christian Powers of Europe as well as by the emer-gence of a westernized Russia. In Iran there was to be a Constitutional Revolu-tion (1905–1911) that ended arbitrary rule on the part of the Shah. With the final removal of the Qajar dynasty in 1925 the influence of the West began to be felt more, an influence the Armenians in general would have been pleased to witness. In Turkey, also, the Young Turk revolution of 1908 promised similar advances to Muslims, Jews and Christians alike, but this was soon to turn to unexpected disaster, at least for the Armenians and other Christian groups.

It was the First World War that was to witness the greatest tragedy for the Armenian population, a tragedy that many now regard as a striking example of genocide. It led to a flow of deportees and refugees southwards from the interior of Turkey to the central areas of the Middle East. Out of these latter territories were formed some of the new states that emerged from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and which have been enumerated above. When they finally arrived, the survivors caused certain changes to those communities already established, the most obvious being their actual numerical growth, the like of which had not been experienced thitherto.

Mandates

It could be argued that after the defeat of Turkey attempts to resettle refugees from Anatolia and Cilicia was facilitated by the presence of French and

British troops in the latter region as well as the mandatory regimes that had been imposed by the League of Nations on the regions to its south, and where the new, though still not independent, states had been created.[15] Particularly favoured at that time, it might be suggested, would have been areas where French authority held sway, favoured due to the preponderance of French prestige throughout the nineteenth century, at least among western-oriented Armenians. It was to France that many of the refugees were eventually to make their way, perhaps even more so than to North America, especially during the inter-war period.

It should also be remembered that in a region where formerly the five Great Powers had wished to extend their influence one way or another, three of those empires – the German, Russian, and Austro–Hungarian – had now, as a result of the War, ceased to exist as such, leaving the field open to the remaining two rivals.[16] France, however, had been severely weakened in that conflict and her concentration began to turn more and more to the situation developing in the Maghrib, a situation that was to reach critical proportions after the Second World War. However, she was to remain involved in Lebanon and Syria until the conclusion of the latter conflict, as indeed did the British in the region until shortly thereafter. It was then, during the Cold War period, that Russia once again began to take considerable interest in extending her influence in the Middle East, as did the United States, and seriously so, for the first time, apart from the periphery Barbary Wars of the early years of the nineteenth century.

The armistice signed at Mudros on 30 October 1918 was followed by the Paris Peace Conference that opened in January of the following year. The latter, as well as the Treaty of Lausanne (24 July 1923), the final peace settlement between the Allies and Turkey, and which superseded the earlier Treaty of Sèvres (10 August 1920) that itself had never been implemented,[17] were to prove bitterly disappointing to Armenians, as so much that had been promised them by the Entente Powers proved to be illusory.[18] In 1918, the Cilician region was placed under French control in accordance with the Sykes–Picot agreement of 1917, but a control that proved itself unsatisfactory.[19] Nevertheless, the presence of the French there had encouraged Cilician refugees to return to their homes, while others, originally from Anatolia, waited in Cilicia for an opportunity to recover their properties once the peace process had resolved the confusion.[20] However, the French decision to withdraw definitively from their Cilician engagement in late 1921, in order to consolidate their position in Greater Syria, meant that most of the Armenians there, being fearful of Turkish reprisals, became refugees once more.[21]

Less than twenty years later, in 1939, there was to be yet another exodus when France relinquished the *sanjak* of Alexandretta to Turkey. Many of these later refugees had to settle or resettle to the south, in Arab regions, augmenting those settlements that had already been created by their co-nationals either before or after the War. Others, however, were to pass through these, seeking to move as quickly as possible to France, the New World or the

Antipodes, conscious by now that for them prospects of security, restoration or compensation were becoming slim. Those measures that had been taken by the Ottoman government in Istanbul between 1918 and 1919 to return properties to Armenians, 'even if these measures were only for show – were eventually abrogated (14 September 1922) by the new regime in Ankara'.[22] Indeed, 'with the general amnesty announced at Lausanne, the whole issue [of the collective return of Armenian deportees] was consigned to oblivion.'[23]

Arab–Israeli conflict

Though the region became less complicated by the removal of certain European protagonists, nevertheless regional political developments were not shy of difficulties and had necessarily their effects on the minorities present there, not excluding the Armenian. The creation of the State of Israel in 1948, however, was to have a fundamental effect on the region's future,[24] the struggle between the Jewish state and its Arab adversaries having serious repercussions, directly or indirectly, on the Armenian population in the region,[25] which, along with other factors, was to lead to a draining from their communities to the West.

In 1967, the Six-Day War resulted in the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with the whole of Jerusalem, including the Armenian Quarter, now in Israeli hands.[26] A litany of further conflicts followed causing an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear in the Middle East as a whole as regards both the present and the future, and would contribute to any Christian minority's anxiety for its security amid so many dangerous imponderables. In addition, in a region preponderantly Muslim, the perception that Israel had the support of Christian Powers places those Christian minorities present in the area in an unenviable position, particularly when the growth and influence of Muslim extremism in recent times is also taken into consideration.

Armenian political parties

A surprising development in the turbulent period of the First World War and its aftermath was the emergence of an independent Armenian state, the first for over 500 years. Naturally, such an event was regarded by Armenians everywhere as highly significant, even more than when the Russians first implanted themselves in the southern Caucasus almost a century earlier, thereby liberating Etchmiadzin – regarded by many as the spiritual heart of the 'nation' – from non-Christian supervision or interference.[27] Even the Armenian political parties, which had come into existence towards the end of the nineteenth century, seem to have been taken by surprise by this sudden turn of events.[28] However, the First Republic (1918–1920) was to be sovietized and the Dashnak-led government disbanded. Even with this transformation, the other Armenian political parties – the Hnchaks and the Ramgavars in particular – adapted themselves accordingly. In the now much

increased Diaspora communities, they did not wish to be in opposition to an Armenian state whose re-establishment had been sought for so long. Soviet or not, it was nevertheless functioning on at least a portion of the ancient homeland.

It was perhaps in the Middle East above all that these political parties were eager to gain influence. It was again not only the question of the propinquity of some of these communities to the homeland, it was also because at that time, as we have stated, those of Lebanon and Syria were the largest communities in the Diaspora. The latter came to understand themselves, and were to be so understood by their fellow Armenians further afield, even seemingly by those in Iran, as the hub of what it meant to be 'Armenian', since emphasis on 'Armenianness' and *hayabahbanoom* ('the preservation of Armenian identity'),[29] and *azgabahbanoum* ('the preservation of the nation') was clearly and sharply evident in that region.[30] The struggle that ensued between the three major parties for control of these Middle Eastern communities, both those well-established and those newly created, was in consequence often quite sharp.[31] Whatever brought Armenians together – church councils, schools, cultural as well as youth and athletic associations, including choirs, dance and theatre groups – were regarded as legitimate targets. It may safely be said that many of these organizations were in effect attached in one way or another, to the Churches, whether Apostolic, Catholic or Evangelical, but particularly to the first to which most Armenians belonged.

In this struggle, each party usually had its own local press to broadcast its opinions. Though there was this undoubted rivalry, nevertheless their aims were virtually one and the same as regards the safeguarding of Armenian language and ethnicity. There was fear by all of the eventual disappearance of that ethnicity by means of what began to be termed, much later, as *jermag chart* ('white massacre'): a slow but sure consequence of a necessary integration that could all too easily slip into total assimilation, thus completing what the Turks were being accused of having almost accomplished through the more dramatic and almost successful *garmeer chart* ('red massacre').

The shared purpose of the parties – promotion and safeguard of language and ethnicity – could not be said, however, to be reflected in their attitudes to Soviet Armenia. The Dashnaks – formally known as the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) – had a lead start in this contest. They had been at least partially instrumental in the declaration of Armenian independence in 1918 and, when ousted by the Bolsheviks in December 1920, many of them had sought refuge in the Middle East. Here they used the *cachet* that they had gained in Armenia, and, earlier, from help rendered by them during the Tatar–Armenian conflicts in the oil fields of Baku in 1905, to strengthen their party's position in the Diaspora. Thus the Dashnaks were to remain generally hostile to any *rapprochement* between the Diaspora and the Soviet State,[32] in contrast to other political groups. Such opposing views caused much tension in the communities, though, undoubtedly, the ARF was to become the most influential Armenian party in the Middle East itself.[33]

Armenian refugee situation

At first, as already mentioned, the Armenian refugees from Anatolia, Cilicia and elsewhere were intent on returning to their homes as soon as conveniently possible and many held on to this project for some decades. Indeed, at first, the nuclei of the new communities that formed themselves in the Arab world often consisted of survivors from the same villages, towns and districts. Regrouped together in such a manner, they felt safer, would speak the same dialect and were able to help each other survive the often harsh conditions in which they at first found themselves. A number, indeed, could only speak Turkish, or were tempted to speak Turkish, and could be reprimanded by their offspring who, in the community schools that had arisen, newly-constructed by the Armenians themselves, were taught that the use of that language in their homes should not be tolerated, taking into consideration what had occurred to their fellow nationals, and indeed to their own relations, in Turkey itself, just a short while before.[34]

Their new settlements were often named after the refugees' places of origin, for example: New Adana, New Moush. Bolstering this social development were the *hairenaktstakan miutiunner* ('compatriotic unions'), which had already been active in the New World, helping Armenian immigrants there to settle and to send remittances to their families, but also ensuring that they did not lose their identity as Armenians,[35] nor, indeed, their original local allegiances. One of the clearest cases of this recreation of a former existence was the establishment of the town of Anjar in the Bekaa valley in Lebanon, reconstituted by the population that had survived the siege of Musa Dağ.[36] The town's six segments were named after the six Armenian villages that had been on that mountain and which, resisting deportation, had thus been besieged by the Turkish military in 1915.

Many of the survivors of such deportations had been housed in camps that soon became overcrowded and unhealthy; others had constructed shanty-dwellings for themselves in *bidonvilles* which were later willingly abandoned, or, in some circumstances, had to be abandoned, for more settled quarters. Apart from how quickly these hard-pressed refugees had managed to build schools and churches for themselves, it is to be noted that gradually they improved their own economic situation. In this matter the 'compatriot unions' as well as the three Armenian denominations, Apostolic, Catholic and Evangelical, had played an important part. Their influence was to be challenged, though, by the political parties which wished to control, as we have seen, the various social and religious structures already existing or now coming into being.

These activities and developments among the refugee population were permitted by the host countries since the *millet* system of the former Ottoman Empire was, in some sense, still in operation in these new states, thereby allowing some autonomy for the minority communities to organize themselves within the general framework of what was customary in Islamic societies.[37]

The decisions of the courts established by the minorities at the government's express command in the Ottoman period to regulate their own internal communal affairs, and which dealt, for example, with questions of marriage and inheritance, had to be respected by all and were upheld by the state. Their schools, welfare agencies and even prisons, as well as their systems for collecting tax, had also led to a clearer understanding about themselves as separate ethnic communities. Considering the changed circumstances of the post-Ottoman period, these arrangements had of necessity been subject to some alteration – the abolition of millet prisons being a clear example.

Diaspora

The term *spiurk* ('diaspora', 'dispersion') began to achieve currency for the new Armenian demographic distribution that had arisen as a consequence of the First World War, gradually replacing the term 'colonies' which, as we have noted, had been in common usage till then for those communities outside the traditional homeland.[38] The new term seems to have implied a need for a sharper sense of unity and continuity among all the scattered Armenian communities, however great or small, and whose dispersion was now the widest in the history of the 'nation'. Focus was still on the homeland, but there was now a particular urgency: the necessity to preserve ethnic identity from assimilation by the dominant cultures of the host states. Thus, despite this wide dispersion, there grew a strong desire by some to emphasize the inherent unity of the Armenian 'nation', wherever its members found themselves, but particularly those in the Middle East where most had managed to gather and whose role was now seen to be, as it were, chief executor of the Armenian heritage. The years immediately following the First World War, especially the decade 1921 to 1930, when the survivors of so much upheaval began to take stock of their new circumstances, have been described by Eghyayan as '*azgahavak*, or "gathering of the nation" or what was left of it, mainly in Syria and Lebanon'.[39]

The 'Diasporan elite'

In the urgent matter of this 'gathering of the nation', the Church was understood as playing a part, as it had done so vitally in the past. However, that articulate laity that became what has been called by Sanjian 'the new diasporan elite',[40] often viewed the Churches as simply conduits of Armenian culture, and valued alone for this; that those same Churches wished to propagate the message of Christ seems often to have been of no great interest in itself as understood in purely spiritual terms. However, religious belief was not generally seen as being obscurantist, whereas it was often condemned as such by European and Russian secularist movements. By the end of the nineteenth century the Church had begun to slip behind in the contest with the 'nationalism' and 'Armenian-ness' espoused by those who viewed these criteria as

more important for holding the 'nation' together. Emphasis on the Armenian language, and in particular its western variant, was to come into its own in the Middle East in the decades following the Great War.[41]

Within the Diaspora the leaders of the political parties were certainly the main element forming this elite, but it 'also included other surviving remnants of the Ottoman Armenian secular intelligentsia – primarily newspaper editors, writers and schoolteachers. Relatively rich Armenians also belonged to it due to their role in organizing the finances of diasporan organizations and sometimes even subsidizing them.'[42]

The question of genocide

Sanjian continues, 'All members of the elite took the genocide as the new diaspora's point of departure and advocated the adaptation of nineteenth-century Armenian nationalist ideals to the early twentieth-century conditions of forced exile.'[43] Though the events of the genocide had created a dark painful shadow over the survivors, it appears that, perhaps for that very reason, there was to be no profound examination of the complex circumstances of the genocide itself till much later, this not occurring until after the fiftieth anniversary of the events of 1915, which in Yerevan was marked by large demonstrations.[44] Earlier, the televised trial of Adolf Eichmann in Israel in 1961 had already helped trigger a greater interest and articulation among Armenians as to their own ethnic trauma experienced during the First World War.

Even then, according to Walker, it was not till the late 1980s that Armenians seriously began 'putting together the beginnings of a systematic account of the genocide of 1915–16. Nothing had been written in a mature manner, using proper archive sources about those events . . . There was no detailed account of what happened, and why it happened, and who ordered it, and who carried out the orders.'[45] In addition, major monuments began to appear to commemorate the tragedy, most notably in Armenia and Syria, the Armenian Soviet authorities permitting the construction of the Tzitzernaka-bert Genocide Memorial in Yerevan, planned in 1965 and completed 1967, and the Syrians, the Deir ez-Zor church and shrine, begun in 1985 and inaugurated in 1991.

Mixed reception

The influx of Armenian refugees[46] from those events that these monuments commemorate was not necessarily one that was greeted with compassion by everyone. It appears that they were not always treated sympathetically by the local population, especially by certain Bedouin tribes.[47] Though many Arabs did show understanding and concern, especially so as both peoples had suffered from Ottoman rule to a greater or lesser degree, nevertheless, for ordinary local persons who may have been unskilled themselves, these new arrivals

were sometimes seen as a threat to their livelihoods. Quite a number of those arriving, however, were skilled artisans, being, for example, shoemakers, goldsmiths, or jewellers.[48] They began fairly quickly to make some headway in their particular trade, eventually achieving success and even respectable status. Many refugees, however, were from an agricultural background and these had usually to turn to other *métiers* for survival, often as low paid unskilled workers. It was this last group that was seen to pose a threat to those Arabs who had recently come from the countryside. The latter were now moving into the towns in considerable numbers, especially this being the case in Syria.[49]

It also appears that not all was harmonious between those Armenians, *deghatsi* (local), already settled in such cities as Beirut, Aleppo, or Cairo, and the newly arrived *kaghtagan* (refugee), for the latter were often from different social or cultural backgrounds. What impression were these new arrivals making on the Muslim Arab host communities, an impression that could undermine the good standing of those Armenians who had been accepted long beforehand? Even today there is some anecdotal evidence of distinctions being made by families who had been in the 'colonies' in the Middle East for generations and those descended from persons who had fled there at the time of the genocide.[50]

Local Arab politics

Though there was much ado as regards Armenian diasporan internal politics in the period we are considering, it was generally understood that the communities in the Arab world would not allow themselves to be involved in local Arab politics as such.[51] This was meant to demonstrate to the Arab population at large that the chief concern of the Armenian refugees as a whole was to return to their homeland, their presence being only a temporary matter. However, both Syria and Lebanon were somewhat different cases from other Middle Eastern states, as there was now a comparatively substantial Armenian presence in both those countries. As regards Lebanon itself, a fine political balance was being maintained between the various ethnic and religious groups in the government of the country.[52] It was only gradually that more Armenian attention was given to the local political scene, as the prospect of a return home seemed to fade. But, more importantly, it was clearly demonstrated that the Christian voice could actually be effective, for the Maronites, by their very numbers, had a major role to play on the political stage.

As regards Syria, there was already a substantial Syriac Christian presence as well as long-established Armenian 'colonies', especially the very active one in Aleppo. Once again, a balance was to be maintained, under the mandatory system, between the various ethnic and religious groups that made up the population. Thus Armenian participation in political activity was not discouraged, though at first there was initial opposition to any newcomer's interest in this arena. As elsewhere, such opposition was also manifested by

the 'indigenous' Armenians, even as regards some of the refugees' wishes to be involved in the local church councils, perhaps due to the probability of politically-motivated activity being an undesired consequence. As regards a settled political representation for Armenians and other Christian communities, as occurred in Lebanon, such an explicit arrangement was soon discounted by the government, though not necessarily an implicit one.

The interest in the wider intra-state political scene was not echoed to the same degree in Egypt, Iraq, Palestine or Jordan, as the Armenian presence was considerably less in those countries. Despite the desire and practice not to be involved in local politics, Armenians, as well as other Christian minorities, occasionally suffered in the unrest that occurred with the various demonstrations of Arab defiance to British and French dominance of the region between the two World Wars. This defiance was the fruit of the early Arab nationalist movement.

We may note two particular cases. Firstly, the events in Egypt in 1919: 'Egypt promptly exploded with riots and demonstrations, not only in the cities, but also throughout the provinces. Trains were derailed, stations burned, British troops and civilians killed, and Armenians and Greeks also attacked.'[53] It would appear, however, that such acts were directed against the economic success of those Christians long established in the country, rather than those recently arrived from Turkey. Secondly, but to the contrary, in Syria, it was the recent arrivals who appear to have been the object of local animosity, not only for economic reasons but because they were believed to be sympathetic to the French mandate; some had indeed enlisted in the irregular troops used by the French against Syrian nationalists during the Great Syrian Revolt (1925–1927).[54]

Problem of assimilation

One of the major problems facing the refugees and their descendants in the Middle East, a problem that faces all Armenians in the Diaspora, was and is the question of assimilation, as opposed to integration. How to avoid it, and thus preserve ethnic identity in an environment that will almost inevitably influence 'you and yours', was of paramount concern to the leaders of the communities. Apart from the churches, schools and associations of various kinds that were there to help resist assimilation, there was also adherence to the tradition inherited from past times in the Ottoman Empire and far earlier, that is to say, the simple domestic expediency of keeping marriage strictly within the community itself and thus preserve demarcation. This was the custom followed without too much difficulty throughout the Middle East where all communities, Muslim, Jewish and Christian alike, would have such expectations.

In addition, the general inclination to apprentice the young only to fellow Armenians was taken as right and proper, whilst the pursuit of the principle of self-employment was seen as a laudatory safeguard for security as well as

for achieving status within the community. Such an arrangement would help secure a tight and inclusive group dynamic, though it seems to have often led to a poor comprehension and practice of Arabic and indeed any deep knowledge of the host societies. The difficult question had been whether Arabic should be so perfected that it be at the expense of Armenian itself.[55] In Egypt, on the other hand, because of the relatively small size of the community, 'the immigrants found it of sheer necessity to adjust to the Arab-Islamic milieu and to acquire relative fluency in the local dialect,'[56]

Such efforts to maintain the Armenian ethos could be successful and were indeed so in the five decades following the Great War, remaining valid if the communities were extensive enough to allow these arrangements. But internal and external factors, social and political, brought pressure to bear so that exogamy, for example, was no longer possible to practice with the ease of times past.

Evidence of decline

For perhaps the last thirty years the Armenian communities in the Middle East have been witnessing a decline after the expansion that marked the early decades of the twentieth century. The hope of returning to their ancestral lands was becoming less and less likely to be fulfilled. The second or third generations' lack of any physical experience of the original homeland, and one that might have created a very particular nostalgia and urgency for a return, has inevitably led to some real disinterest in returning at all. In unison with this have been those developments of a serious nature within the host countries themselves that have already been touched upon, particularly the appearance of unstable regimes, continuing economic uncertainties, the presence of the state of Israel, the swelling of Islamic fundamentalism. This has led many to quit the scene to find shelter in the West or in the Gulf States,[57] or even, for some Armenians, the newly-independent Republic of Armenia, despite the latter's economic and political problems.

It was the regimes that followed the demise of the mandates that had eventually begun to busy themselves with the internal governance of the minorities in general. The loosening of the quasi-*millet* machinery, restrictions imposed on free enterprise, confiscations of property, interference in matters of education – all this caused unease among the Christian minorities. This development went hand in hand with the Cold War, when a number of states in the Middle East moved into the Soviet category of 'friendly nations', often pursuing radical socialist policies and thus in opposition to being 'clients' of the capitalist West. These policies affected many minority individuals, leading them to a feeling of being merely second-class citizens, constantly under a shadow of uncertainty, a common enough experience of Christians generally in the Middle East today, despite having Muslim friends who may value them as non-Muslim members of society.

Having thus outlined something of the political and social context, let us

now examine the situation of the Church itself under the new circumstances produced by the First World War and its aftermath.

II The Church

Catastrophe

In Anatolia, the catastrophe that fell upon the Armenian Apostolic Church meant a complete reversal of fortune for the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The Patriarch had had an important role in the Ottoman Empire's machinery, not only as spiritual head of most Armenians in the Empire, but also more importantly as the head of the Armenian *millet*,[58] and thus the official representative of most Armenian subjects to the Sublime Porte.[59] Even though the Patriarch was himself under the spiritual authority of the Catholicos of Etchmiadzin, in Russian Armenia, his jurisdiction was in a sense clearly far more influential than that of the Catholicos, whose style and governance was essentially provincial in character. In addition, the Patriarch's influence had eventually extended to Europe and to the Americas, though these areas were to be consigned by Patriarch Ormanian (1896–1908) to the pastoral care of Etchmiadzin, in order largely to prevent the Sultan, Abdul Hamid II (1876–1909), from placing pressure on the Patriarchate to control that adverse criticism of his regime emanating from communities there.

Though loss on a great scale had been experienced in the mid-1890s, the further but more devastating loss, beginning in 1915, of churches, monasteries, schools, dioceses and, above all, the disappearance through death or flight of most of its faithful and clergy, now meant a singular reduction in significance for the Patriarchate.[60] The two other Catholicosates that were located in Ottoman territory at the time were also to suffer change. Indeed, that of Aghtamar, situated on one of the islands of Lake Van, had already been dissolved in 1895 and its flock had disappeared completely 20 years thereafter, whilst that of Sis in Cilicia was forced to leave its centre and, finally, in 1930, establish a new home in Antelias, a suburb of Beirut.[61]

Through the scene of a somewhat curious, but short-lived phenomenon, instigated by the Young Turks, regarding a reorganization of the Armenian Sees,[62] the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the fourth active spiritual jurisdiction of the Armenian Church, remained relatively untouched by the world conflict.[63] It became instrumental, however, in not only aiding and housing many of the refugees, but also in strengthening the Catholicosate of Sis in its efforts to re-anchor itself in the Arab world. To this end, in 1929, the dioceses of Beirut, Damascus and Latakia were ceded by Jerusalem to Antelias.

Commenting on the transfer of these dioceses, Sanjian: 'These measures were deemed important to strengthen the Armenian Apostolical (sic) Church against Catholic and Protestant proselytizing activity in the French-mandated territories.'[64] There are, indeed, popular stories that even in those

distressing times, Protestant and Catholic Armenians, or their non-Armenian co-religionists, took unfair advantage of Apostolic Armenian refugees, persuading them to leave the Mother Church and join their own ranks. It is claimed that the bait would have been financial aid, food or the prospect of better protection for the future against the ever-present possibility of sudden political disturbances, or, worse, by anti-Christian mobs easily aroused by the unscrupulous.[65]

During the Armenian Catholic Synod held in Rome in 1928 to assess the post-war situation, a report was read, compiled by an Armenian Franciscan based in the Holy Land, Fr. Giovanni Balian. The report does indeed speak of a number of families who became Catholic at this time, though it is clarified that they approached the friar for that very purpose, rather than he them. What their motivation might have been is open to speculation, though it may be conceded that their conversion could have been genuine. Generally, though, conversions of this nature were interpreted by a number of their former co-religionists as disingenuous.[66] Such matters and such comments were not uncommon among Armenians before and after the 'Great Catastrophe.' Those who left the Apostolic Church were seen to have betrayed their very identity, thus weakening the 'nation' and leaving it an easier prey to assimilation. Such accusations were denied by those so accused. Nevertheless, a sense of mutual suspicion and perhaps even bitterness between the denominations could have added to the difficulties of refugees of whatever religious allegiance.[67]

The Armenian Catholic Church had also suffered heavy losses. The Catholicos-Patriarchs, who had been residing in the Ottoman imperial capital since 1867, had experienced extreme internal communal problems and even schism for some years. With the loss sustained during the war of so many faithful and clergy in Anatolia[68] and the uncertain conditions brought about by the advent of the Turkish Republic in 1923, a decision was taken at that same Synod of 1928 to return the patriarchal seat to Bzommar in Lebanon, where it had originally established itself in 1742.[69] A seminary was already in operation there and today remains an important institution for preparing youths destined for missionary work among far-flung Armenian Catholic communities.

Concerning the Evangelical Armenians, almost all their foundations in Anatolia had disappeared, though a number of major Colleges where American personnel were to be found survived.[70] After the conflagration, roots were to be planted in Greater Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East. As was the case with the other denominations, Protestant communities were already established in the region, though smaller and of more recent foundation. Today, these communities form the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches of the Middle East.

Antelias and Etchmiadzin

The presence of the Catholicosate of Cilicia was of great import for Armenians in the Middle East: 'The Catholicosate was central to the massive efforts of recovery and the creation of nuclei around which the dynamics of survival of the nation would gradually build up.'.[71] It had in a sense come into its own by those events that had so damaged the Patriarchate of Constantinople, for it had thereby been removed from the latter's direct sphere of influence. It has been criticized, though, for providing what appears to some to be a superfluous and rival jurisdiction within the Armenian Apostolic Church as a whole, when by rights Etchmiadzin alone, it has been argued, should be the sole source of authority within the Church, and that the Great War would have been the opportune moment for its demise.[72] However, the Dashnak party as well as the faithful and clergy of Cilicia in exile were not inclined to be persuaded by such sentiments.

The unease felt by certain Armenians as regards the survival of the Cilician See was furthered by the tensions that now reappeared between the two catholicosates.[73] Etchmiadzin came to be seen by many as a tool of the regime in the Soviet Armenian Republic, or at least heavily compromised by it, whilst Antelias was seen as the symbol of a future and free Armenia and was largely supported as such by the Dashnaks and their sympathizers. Indeed, it was believed that the Dashnaks intended to control the catholicosate, so important was it for their campaign against the powers of Soviet Armenia, whether ecclesiastical or civil, and the machinations of Moscow that were generally believed to stimulate the Yerevan government.

The Armenian Constitution of 1863[74] is still operative within the management of the affairs of Antelias, where the laity are given an important voice not only in the administration of the Church, but also more pertinently in the election of the Catholicos himself. Furthermore, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, whose chief preoccupation was and is the maintenance of an Armenian presence in the Holy Places, had depleted itself of those three bishoprics mentioned above. This was done in order, not only, it is said, to succour Antelias in its initial difficulties in being resettled, or to prevent proselytism, apparent or otherwise, by Catholic or Evangelical enthusiasts, but also to prevent the interference of a politically-motivated laity in the management of the Patriarchate itself, which was likely to happen seeing how determined the laity in the region was in this respect. That laity, now that Etchmiadzin was out of reach for the while, wished, for that very reason, to ensure that the Church in the Middle East was fully focused on the need to provide a bulwark against Soviet influence in the Diaspora. The Patriarchate wished to guard its own independence, an independence guaranteed if the celibate members of the Brotherhood of St James continued alone to exercise their prerogatives, most especially in the election of the patriarchs and in the control of patriarchal property.

A question of no small consequence was how the laity and clergy through-

out the much enlarged Diaspora were to respond both to the Soviet Armenian government, and, more importantly for the Diasporan Church, to the Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin. In 1917, the Catholicos Georg V (1911–1930) had abrogated the *polozhenie* of 1836, which had acted as a stranglehold by Russia over Armenian Church affairs in Russian territories. Now, however, he himself was to experience another but unequivocally atheist stranglehold on the activities of the Church. How far was the Church and its personnel tainted in its attempts to survive under such a regime? Though there had been strong rivalry in the past between the two Catholicosates and an uneasy peace had been forged, nevertheless the basic Christian creed and the not inconsiderable Armenian heritage had held them together. Despite this bond, there was still the question as to how far the Church might be used for the political ends of Moscow.

However, there appears to have been no question of the Patriarchates of Istanbul or Jerusalem relinquishing their spiritual allegiance to Etchmiadzin, even though under the trying circumstances imposed by the Soviet authorities, they might have complete sympathy with the role of Antelias as being, what indeed was seen to be by many, the true voice of a free Armenian Church. However, it was itself greatly indebted to lay interest in its activities but also aware that from time to time the political needs of that powerful laity, especially those of the Dashnak conviction, seemed to influence its affairs too deeply. The schism that ensued in the 1950s, particularly in the United States, is indicative of the pressure brought to bear on Antelias by both laity and clergy who resented any attempt by the Soviet Union to interfere in Diasporan concerns.[75]

The most notorious example of what was interpreted by many as such interference concerned the unprecedented arrival in Beirut in 1956 of the newly-elected Catholicos of Etchmiadzin, Vasgen I, possibly to 'manage' the election of a new Catholicos for Antelias, supporting a candidate that was pleasing to Yerevan, which meant, finally, pleasing to Moscow.[76] It became a *débâcle* from which it took some time for Vazken's reputation to recover.[77] Eventually, however, as his long reign progressed, he was to gain great respect throughout the Armenian world and beyond. He lived to see the fall of the Soviet authorities and the establishment of the third, but independent, Republic of Armenia in 1991. In addition, some reconciliation with Antelias and with the communities of the Middle East was finally achieved.

Just prior to independence, the Nagorno-Karabagh crisis triggered considerable demonstrations in Yerevan and led finally to armed conflict with Azerbaijan where massacres of Armenians in Baku, Sumgayit and elsewhere, as well as the devastating earthquake of 1988, led to differences between the two Sees being laid aside before the task of bringing aid to the stricken population. Despite hopes that remaining differences might have been completely resolved with the election of Catholicos Karekin II of Cilicia as Karekin I, Catholicos of Etchmiadzin, in 1995 – the first event of such a nature in the history of the Church – the schism has not yet been completely

healed. There are still, for example, two separate Armenian jurisdictions in North America, though it is said that it is the political parties which, holding sway behind the scenes, are reluctant to relinquish their influence. Complaints of how this damages the Church as a whole are frequently heard from concerned faithful; occasional sniping by devotees on both sides may be discovered in the Armenian press.[78] The creation of the prelacy for Canada by Antelias in 2002 was seen, by many, rightly or wrongly, as evidence that Antelias had no serious intention of healing the breach between the two catholicosates.[79]

It is interesting to note that exactly ten years after independence, in May, 2001, the present Catholicos of Cilicia, Aram I, spoke of the role of his own catholicosate in the following terms: '. . . this centuries-old spiritual center . . . with its unique historical experience, broader perspectives and ecumenical vision, must become a bridge between the old and the new, between Armenia and the Diaspora, between the East and the West'.[80] It is uncertain how Etchmiadzin reacted to this statement.

'Repatriation' and the Church

On at least two occasions, calls for the 'repatriation' of Armenians from the Diaspora to Soviet Armenia were forthcoming and with varying results. The effect that such policies had on the Churches and their constituents is worthy of mention. Indeed, even before sovietization, during the short period of true independence (1918–1920), there had been such a movement. Part of the very excitement engendered by this resuscitated state was the call for 'repatriation', a call not only to those refugees just arrived in the Arab world, but also to Armenians already well-established elsewhere. There was much enthusiasm for this idea. Even the Mekhitarists[81] encouraged delegations from Armenian Catholic communities in central Europe to visit and explore the feasibility of a permanent return to support the struggling state.[82] However, their, and others', interest soon waned when the Bolsheviks took control of the Republic in December 1920, thus establishing the Soviet Republic. There was also the question as to whether this was truly 'repatriation', for almost all the refugees in the Arab world and elsewhere had not come from what had formerly been Russian Armenia, but from Turkish Armenia. Indeed, there were refugees in the new state who were waiting to return to the latter territory if and when that were to prove possible.

The Soviets themselves later took up the call and a number of Armenians from the Middle East were 'repatriated' accordingly. This first movement lasted, albeit in a somewhat haphazard fashion, until 1936, when the Stalinist Terror prevented, for the while, any communication with the Diaspora. It was also reported, however, that conditions within the Soviet state were not quite as the publicity broadcast by Armenian communists in the Diaspora had described so enthusiastically. Disillusion had been swift, not only on economic grounds but also socially as, once again, those already there were

not altogether welcoming to the newcomers, largely due to that very economic situation.[83] Furthermore, the general treatment meted out to the Church, including the suspicious death of Catholicos Khoren I (1932–1938), did not inspire great confidence in such a regime.[84]

The years 1946–1948 saw yet another call for a return to Armenia and once again there was a response from various communities, including those of the Middle East. On this occasion, however, it is clear that the then Armenian Catholic Patriarch, Agagianian (1895–1971), himself born in what became Soviet Georgia and, as a newly-ordained priest, a first-hand witness to its sovietization, was highly critical of this new Soviet enticement, much to the annoyance of the newly-elected Catholicos of Etchmiadzin, Georg VI (1945–1954) who supported the movement. The latter would have seen the scheme as a laudable attempt to consolidate not only the 'Armenian-ness' of the state itself, but also to solidify his own position within it. Agagianian,[85] on the other hand, feared that the departure of any of his own flock and their resettlement would undermine their faith and allegiance. After all, Catholic villages in northern Armenia and southern Georgia had been forbidden any spiritual care for years, and the Apostolic Church, as we have noted, had also suffered seriously under the regime. He also warned of the economic realities of the Soviet system.

Nevertheless, a number of Armenian Catholics joined the exodus, including some from Kessab and from the villages in its locality, lying in the extreme north west of Syria, and where they had formed a not inconsiderable presence. This must have been galling to the Cardinal as it was he who for that very reason had persuaded the French not to include that particular district in the transference of the Alexandretta *sanjak* from Syria to Turkey in 1939. When Syria finally achieved independence, he was to receive the Syrian Government's highest honour for his successful approach to the authorities in Paris about this matter.[86]

The question of this new Soviet invitation caused further antagonism between the political parties. The Dashnaks were completely opposed, whereas the Hnchaks and the Ramgavars, and naturally the communists in the Diaspora, were supportive. It was once again in the predominantly Church-related organizations, which in effect, as we have suggested, meant almost all Armenian organizations, that the struggle manifested itself and which, for other matters, Sanjian claims is still the case today: 'Indeed, in the Middle East, the church is still the arena in which most intra-Armenian disputes are fought out, with the clergy often dragged into political conflicts.'[87]

It would appear that for the most part pressure and infiltration by these parties were concentrated on members of the Apostolic majority; the Evangelical and Catholic Armenians had not, necessarily, the same value in this respect. In addition, the laity in the Armenian Catholic Church, due to the debilitating conflicts of the previous century, had largely been forced to withdraw from any real exercise of influence in Church affairs.[88] Such involvement was far from customary in the Roman Church itself, and was thus, it could be

said, the antithesis of the Armenian Evangelical model. Agagianian, who had been elected Patriarch-Catholicos by the patriarchal Synod in 1937, with no lay involvement in the proceedings, appears to have been comparatively free from any pressure from these political parties; how far individual lay Armenian Catholics were affected by them is difficult to gauge.[89] Be that as it may, Hovannissian gives the figure of 150,000 for those Armenians who eventually moved from the Middle East to Soviet Armenia in this brief post-war period, of which only 4,000, 'primarily from the unskilled classes',[90] came from the more prosperous community of Egypt. But the sudden cessation of the repatriation policy by the Soviet authorities had unfortunate consequences, 'stranding hundreds of families who had liquidated their immovable properties at a fraction of the real market value.'[91]

It remains unclear what the attitudes of the various Catholicoses of Antelias were to these Soviet enterprises, which were largely funded by the Ramgavar party and by the like-minded AGBU. The following, though, gives a hint of what must have been disapproval, certainly of the 1946 invitation: 'The nation in the entire Middle East was stormed, and the subsequent years were not exactly times of national integration between the pro-Soviet factions and parties on the one hand, and their opponents on the other. Once again, Armenians were caught between super-power conflicts and paid a high price of their national unity'.[92] However, it must be clear that the inevitable loss of many of its faithful to Etchmiadzin must have been a serious irritation to Antelias.

Schools and marriage

The question of 'repatriation' was a highly significant one and affected many families at close quarters. Other factors also caused concern on the more domestic front, and still do. In the Middle East, and indeed elsewhere, a certain trend is detectable that could be seen as a serious threat to the integrity of the ethnic identity of Armenians in the Diaspora and is of particular concern for both the Church and for leaders of the communities concerned. Two such factors are education and marriage, both of which may affect the survival of the Christian faith itself as particularly understood and expressed by the Apostolic Orthodox Church.

A number of Armenian children now attend non-Armenian schools which can, unwittingly, undermine to some extent, their identity as Armenians as their own language is not part of the curriculum, whilst other languages, particularly English, are much sought after.[93] In addition, there are schools that are run by Catholic and Protestant Armenians, which can sometimes cause tension between the denominations, as in almost all cases funding for them relies on private donations. Indeed, it could safely be said that most of those Armenian children attending Catholic schools are in fact from an Apostolic background. Furthermore, the only Armenian-managed university in the Middle East, the Haigazian in Beirut, is a Protestant foundation, established

by the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Middle East in cooperation with the Armenian Missionary Association of America.

Another matter of concern has been the growing number of marriages between Armenians and non-Armenians, though the latter are usually also Christian. This could result in Armenian being no longer spoken in the home as well as a loosening of Church ties as the successive generations become less attached to their Armenian inheritance. Such instances probably occur more frequently where Armenian communities are not so numerous, or even where that is not the case, communal pressure may not play so important a role: the community in California, though substantial, would not necessarily have the same weight in this matter as would the community in Lebanon which might feel itself under 'siege' by the preponderant Islamic culture.

Indiscretions and respite

Regrettably, there were incidents that brought the Church into disrepute, incidents, in a comparatively small and almost intimate 'nation', that reverberated with the greatest of ease throughout its constituency. Half a century ago, there were disagreements between Bishop Yeghishe Derderian and Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan over the succession to the See of Jerusalem. Eventually, in 1957, Nersoyan was elected as patriarch. The following year, he was taken forcibly by Jordanian soldiers and put on a plane for Beirut. On 5 April 1960, according to Walker, the monastic brotherhood was 'compelled at the gunpoint of the Jordanian army to elect Archbishop Derderian *locum tenens* of the patriarchate'.[94] Derderian was then elected patriarch the following June. The machinations behind this matter would be difficult to unravel.

Seven years later, in 1967, a further matter caused equal concern to Armenians in general: the attempted sale of 23 valuable illuminated Gospel manuscripts from the Jerusalem monastery, their worth being at that time, according to Walker, between £300,000 and £500,000.[95] The sale was prevented by the art historian Sirarpie Der Nersessian (1896–1989) who had seen its notification in the relevant Sotheby's catalogue. In addition, it is said that certain properties and land belonging to the patriarchate were sold secretly to the Israelis, the monies thereby gained not being publicly accounted for. Seemingly, the responsibility for these various transactions lay with the Patriarchate itself.

The election of Torkom Manoogian as Patriarch in 1990[96] appears to have brought some respite after the lengthy, but in a number of respects unsettling, reign of Derderian (1960–1990).[97] Sympathy, in addition, has been created throughout the Diaspora for the patriarchate by two factors: the extraordinary behavior of the Greek Patriarch of the city, Irinaios, when, in the Holy Sepulchre during the Easter Eve Liturgy in 2004, he jostled the Armenian representative, repeating this activity in the same locality the following year. He was forced to resign his position shortly thereafter, having also aroused

the rage of his own flock – Christian Palestinians – after it was discovered that he had sold, it is said, a number of properties within the Christian Quarter to Israeli entrepreneurs. The second factor has been the recurrence of Armenian clergy being verbally and sometimes physically abused by young Orthodox Jews, even occasionally whilst the former were in formal procession en route to or from the Holy Sepulchre.

Ecumenism

The Armenian Apostolic Church, along with other Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches, became a member of the Middle Eastern Council of Churches in 1974. This move was almost certainly one of the fruits of the Addis Ababa conference organized by the Emperor Haile Silassie in 1965, when for the first time the heads of all the Oriental Orthodox Churches 'participated in the inner reconciliation of Oriental Orthodox Christianity'.[98] Worthy of note, since that time, and no doubt aided by their membership, has been a *rapprochement* between the Greek Church of the region on the one hand and the Coptic, Syrian and Armenian Churches on the other concerning Christological matters.[99] Later still, in 1990, the Roman Catholic Church of the region also became a member, a membership that included the various Oriental-rite Catholic Churches. Thus the Armenian Catholic Church found itself represented for the first time on such a level at such an ecumenical assembly.[100]

Using this forum, there have since been a number of occasions when the heads of the Churches in the Middle East have been able to act in unison, very particularly as regards the Camp David summit in July 2000 where one of the matters for consideration had been that of the status of Jerusalem. In addition, the possibility of dividing the four Quarters of the Old City (Armenian, Christian, Muslim and Jewish) between the Palestinian and Israeli authorities was mooted, of which Hagopian has outlined the disadvantages for the Christian communities.[101] These matters disquieted the Churches, as they were not party to such vital exchanges that might have overturned their daily lives. However, the Camp David meetings failed to come to any satisfactory conclusions and the question of the future status of Jerusalem is still an open one.

The Armenian Church being a member of the Status Quo Commission is obliged to work in collaboration with the Roman and Greek Churches in their mutual concerns for the Holy Places. In more recent times, it became a member of the 'Jerusalem Inter-Church Committee' (JICC). 'The Churches of Jerusalem established this ecumenical body in the mid 1990s as an instrument that would help them with their Jubilee celebrations for the new millennium. JICC [is] comprised of representatives from all four families of Churches.'[102] So successful was this initiative that it has continued beyond the Millennium celebration for which it was originally founded. In one recent case, the Christian Churches demonstrated solidarity with the Armenian

Church in its protest concerning the Israeli confiscation of land through which the wall being built to keep Palestinian fighters or suicide bombers from infiltrating Israeli settlements was due to pass.

There is also the organization The Oriental (Non-Chalcedonian) Orthodox Churches in the Middle East, the presidents of which are Pope Shenuda III of Alexandria, Patriarch Mar Ignatius I of Antioch and All the East and Catholicos Aram I of the Great House of Cilicia. 'Throughout history, we lived a concrete unity in faith, theology and doctrines. We expressed our oneness through the first Ecumenical Councils of Nicea 325, Constantinople 381, and Ephesus 431. We continue to live our unity of faith through church life, and interchurch and ecumenical relations.'[103]

On the wider ecumenical stage, the position of Antelias, as opposed to that of Etchmiadzin, permitted the former to respond more quickly to the invitation from the Vatican to send observers to the then forthcoming second Council of that name and which finally opened in the autumn of 1962. However, owing to the thawing of relations between the Vatican and Moscow, the Russian Orthodox Church also sent observers, as did Etchmiadzin, though one year later than the former. Karekin Sarkissian, Catholicos to be, first of Antelias and then of Etchmiadzin, was one of the two sent by Khoren I, the other being Ardavast Terterian. It was also in 1962 that the Armenian Church became a full member of the World Council of Churches, or rather its two catholicosates, Etchmiadzin and Antelias, were accepted and were to send separate representatives, much to the chagrin of Vazken.[104] Vazken himself was to visit Pope Paul VI in 1971, at which event Patriarch-Emeritus Agagianian was also present.[105]

We may note here something of the work of the present Catholicos of Cilicia, Aram I. As a Moderator of the World Council of Churches, in February 2006, he chaired the ninth Assembly of the Council held in Alegre, Brazil. Having had an important role in the deliberations of the Council, he brought to the attention of an international audience greater knowledge of the Armenian Church. He is also much to the fore as regards a pressing problem for the Church, not solely in the Middle East, but within Armenia itself and throughout the Diaspora. That problem concerns what many Armenians consider the need for renewal within the Church, and for some this signifies long-needed reforms.

The problem of renewal

Aram in his address to the World Council of Churches in Geneva on 29 July, 2001, deals openly with the question of renewal: 'The greatest challenge facing the Armenian Church is its renewal that should encompass its entire collective life. All the children of our nation should participate in this work. All the problems of the Church should be discussed with a realistic approach taking into consideration the particular conditions of our life. This should be the major message of the 1,700th Anniversary.'[106] Elsewhere, he writes:

'. . . our Church can no longer remain a mere *custodian* of spiritual values; it must become the *messenger* of the Gospel in a new-world context.'[107]

The Catholicos addressing young people in Detroit (December, 2006) spoke as follows: 'By renewal I don't mean certain adjustments within the framework of the Armenian Divine Liturgy. By renewal I don't mean changing the language of the liturgy or introducing some changes in the administration or the structure of the church. That would be a very super-ficial, one-sided perception. By renewal I understand making our church a *people*'s church (. . .) impacting the life of our people. By renewal I mean making our church responsive to the needs and expectations of our people. By renewal I mean reaffirming the missionary, evangelistic, and educational outreach of the church.'[108]

However, for a number of Armenians, one of the obstacles to that renewal concerns the Liturgy itself, or rather the manner of its expression. Passions may quickly rise on this subject: to challenge the use of *krapar* (classical Armenian) or to curtail the prayers within the liturgical context is far more consequential for Armenians than Latin ever was for even the most 'trad-itional' of Catholics. When the history of the Armenian people is taken into consideration, the 'weight' of the Liturgy, with its historical, cultural and ethnic significance, let alone its religious import, that 'weight' cannot be over-estimated. Hence the general refusal or reticence to tamper in any way with what is regarded as a precious symbolic entity.[109]

Unfortunately, the use of *krapar* renders the Liturgy almost incompre-hensible to the majority of the laity. Even for a number of the clergy, their own comprehension may not often go beyond that which is familiar to them in the *badarak*,[110] though it may be argued that that is actually sufficient. A number of Armenians, as pointed out earlier, do not entirely take the Church seriously, other than as a repository of Armenian tradition and as one means of maintaining 'national' identity. Many of these are confirmed in their views by the use of classical Armenian and would therefore object to the possibility of any change in that direction. Nevertheless, others feel that the actual religious import of the Liturgy, by the latter's very superabundance and antique tongue, is being prevented from being revealed to those for whom it is meant. Apart from the difficulty of language, we may note here that the very length of the Liturgy can be, for many, another disincentive to attend church apart from Christmas, Easter or certain family occasions.

These characteristics unintentionally obscure its *raison d'être*: to com-municate those 'mysteries' that are intended to affect the lives of Armenian Christians. For many, the Liturgy seems to be largely ineffective in facilitating the Church's contact with the faithful in general and the youth in particular. To have renewal without reform of the Liturgy would be extremely difficult to attain, as that must in itself be the source of inspiration for any enduring renewal.

Aram I, on the contrary, believes that renewal in this way is possible. Through catechesis young people may be spiritually fortified, this being

especially important in the context of the Middle East where the prevailing culture is Arab and Muslim, and where the temptation for Christians to quit the scene altogether is becoming ever more irresistible. He seeks renewal in order to make the Church of greater relevance to ordinary Armenians who are, in addition, in danger from the general sweep of secularism in and from the West. It appears that even that touchstone that the Armenian Church and people of the Middle East had represented, until fairly recently, to all the Diasporan communities, has been affected by the secularist viewpoint.

It has been said that the celebrations held to mark the 1,700th anniversary of Armenia's official conversion to Christianity was an opportunity lost for the whole Armenian Church in that nothing concrete was accomplished as regards much needed reform. It would appear that there are still differences of outlook between the two Catholicosates in this matter, with Antelias seemingly more ready for change than Etchmiadzin, but unable to act unilaterally. This does not help the Church in the Middle East, where Christianity already presents to the Muslim world a complex and confusing reality of many and sometimes conflicting positions.

That the Church's role *vis-à-vis* the Armenian 'nation' has changed in the last hundred years, most especially after the First World War and particularly so in the Diaspora, Catholicos Aram makes clear in the following statement: 'Critical assessment and self-understanding and a realistic re-evaluation of its environment should lead the Church to clearly define its changing role in the Armenian Diaspora in general and in the Middle East in particular. A church cannot survive without witness, and renewal is fundamental for an efficacious witness (. . .). In the past our Church played a crucial role in the *physical* survival of the Armenian people. In the present world, the Armenian Church is called to lead its people towards *spiritual* survival. Therefore the Armenian Church must move from a survival-centred to a mission-centred witness.'[111]

General summary

Without doubt the events of the First World War greatly disrupted the Armenian communities in the Middle East and caused a seismic shift in Armenian affairs in general. Even though the term 'genocide' was not coined till some time after the tragedy that befell a great portion of the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire, nevertheless the treatment meted out was, by any standards of judgment, exactly what that term signifies. The 'colonies', great or small, particularly those in the Arab Middle East, were to be inundated by refugees. In addition, the collapse of the Empire and, from the ensuing turmoil, the emergence of new states, some to be under mandate, with the unexpected revival of an independent entity, the Republic of Armenia, and its subsequent sovietization, with the realignment of the Armenian political parties to take consideration of this new factor as well as

their continuing enmity towards Turkey itself, all contributed to that foment in Armenian circles which is still evident today.

On the more personal level, though at first welcomed by most Arabs, and by most of those Armenians already long settled in the Arab world, the newcomers, nevertheless, were seen soon enough by some as an economic threat once they had organized themselves, and had begun to work and use the skills they had brought with them, often with great success. Even those without such skills could be seen as unwanted competition by Arab new-comers to the cities. The 'indigenous' Armenians in their turn were some-times alarmed by the cultural differences often evident between themselves and the new arrivals, many of whom were from the Turkish provinces, with experiences at odds with those of the inhabitants of Beirut or Cairo.

There was also the growth of fervent anger in the heart of the Arab world by what was seen to be the duplicity of the victorious European Powers in their cavalier attitude to the nationalist aspirations of the Arab peoples. It would seem that on occasion the Armenians present among them became suspect, rightly or wrongly, of not actively supporting such aspirations, but were rather, directly or indirectly, supposedly supporting, or sympathetic to, Christian hegemony in the region.

The Armenian Apostolic Church was faced with enormous problems. The tragic loss inflicted upon it in terms of faithful and clergy as well as the seizure or outright destruction of churches and monasteries, and the looting of ecclesiastical artefacts, some of great historical and national value and significance – this was the desolate ground on which the Church had now to struggle to revive itself from such total trauma. It had to solve the problem of the acute shortage of priests, of how to serve the new diasporan communities, to help gather the orphans and rescue those abducted, to safeguard the religious and ethnic inheritance of its people.

The once powerful Patriarchate of Constantinople was now confined to the Republic of Turkey, a much-reduced constituency when compared to its pre-war situation. As with other Christian denominations, but perhaps more pointedly in its case, it was to face years of bureaucratic difficulties laid in its path by a suspicious and strongly nationalist government, difficulties that still encumber it.

The Catholicosate of Aghtamar had already been suppressed before the general turmoil, and with the latter church life there ceased altogether. The Catholicosate of Sis was forcibly uprooted, but was fortunate enough to re-establish itself, being now located on the outskirts of Beirut. The Jerusalem Patriarchate adjusted itself to the new reality and focused itself on its responsibilities for the Holy Places. It was aware of the interest of the politically motivated laity, members of whom were concentrating their efforts on returning to the homeland of historical Armenia as well as on the new Soviet state that had appeared so remarkably on the political scene. As regards the Republic of Turkey, it soon became clear that there was no hope of allowing any return or restitution, and that her powerful allies, due to

her strategic importance, would not encourage close examination of any past misdeeds.

The Apostolic Church, as well as the Armenian Catholic and Evangelical Churches, had helped the survivors of the atrocities to rebuild their lives and to adjust to their new environment, with the hope of avoiding the danger of their being too easily assimilated into the surrounding cultures. Hand in hand with the churches that were built, and also quickly provided by the survivors themselves, were the schools and various cultural associations that were to help bind individuals together both socially and linguistically. The Armenian political parties did not wish to be involved in local Arab politics – apart from the unusual cases of Syria and Lebanon – but rather sought control of those associations in their efforts to further their aims as regards both Turkey and Soviet Armenia. Therefore, it would seem, the Church in the Middle East was somewhat hampered at times in the face of the dominating factor of the laity, though the latter would not take too strong an interest in the spiritual character of the Church, but rather in its general influence on the faithful at large. The laity was therefore keen on its prerogatives concerning the elections of the Catholicos of Sis and the Catholicos of Etchmiadzin, though, with the latter, Soviet invitations to that event were closely monitored.

This too caused friction within the Diaspora between those who favoured a strict allegiance to, or sympathy for, Etchmiadzin, whatever Soviet involvement might or might not be, and those who put their trust in Antelias as the only truly independent ecclesiastical body, once again despite Dashnak power behind the throne, real or presumed. On the other hand, the clergy themselves would often, in those times of readjustment to a new reality for the Armenian people, not be shy of firm commitment to the survival of the 'nation', signifying this by their tolerance of strong lay involvement in ecclesiastical affairs for 'national' ends.

The Armenian Catholic and Evangelical Churches appear to have been less influenced by the activities of the Armenian political parties whilst their lack of affiliation to either Antelias or Etchmiadzin freed them from the immediacy of the tensions generated by the struggle between those two Sees amidst the Apostolic community at large. Nevertheless, they themselves had suffered from serious internal disputes, most especially the Armenian Catholic community in Constantinople, but the removal of the patriarchate to Lebanon in 1928 had resulted in greater calm for the Church as a whole.

In the 'national' struggle that gained momentum during the latter half of the nineteenth century, religion in itself was not seen necessarily in opposition to this struggle. However, the views of most of the Church hierarchy and the ordinary clergy had often been so interpreted: naturally conservative, with the situation of the Armenian population in Anatolia, difficult though it might have been, having necessarily to be accepted as finally 'the will of God'. This, though, was to be offset by such a remarkable figure as Patriarch Khrimian Hairig (1820–1907), whose voice was highly influential in support

of 'national' aspirations, not brooking for a moment any pious acceptance of the intolerable conditions to be found in the provinces.[112]

It is remarkable that out of the heterogeneous elements that made up the Armenian communities in the Middle East and in the wider Diaspora after the First World War, and through the efforts of the various groups, whether religious, political or social, that had influence over the population, and even when those groups were opposed to each others' influence, there began to be formed a certain sense of 'Armenian-ness'. Panossian summarizes the situation as follows: '. . . under the leadership of competing organisations, a heterogeneous group of people with fundamental differences in terms of regional identity, religion (Apostolic, Catholic, Protestant), language (Armenian, Turkish, dialects), occupation and class, social status (refugees, assimilated elites, intellectuals), political loyalties and cultural influences from host-states, were moulded into a relatively coherent community with a collective consciousness as a *diasporic nation*. In short, 'Armenian-ness' as *the* most important identity category was either created or reinforced in the diaspora, superseding the differences within and between the communities.'[113]

After the Second World War, the policies of some of the now completely independent Arab governments often became less sympathetic to Christian and other minorities. Such a change was inspired not only by Arab nationalism, but also by the Cold War that led a number of these states into 'friendship' with the Soviet block. This was especially effective in the economic field, but also in the educational, causing a migration of members of minorities, a movement that continues to this day, even though, eventually, a less rigid approach was adopted in some cases, especially in Syria. It was felt that there was now little opportunity for free enterprise, an area of activity in which the Armenian often excelled. Armenian communities began to be affected everywhere in the Middle East, many of their members emigrating to where such activities were in fact encouraged, especially Europe and the United States.

Thus a decrease in members began, with the consequence of a growing sense of vulnerability felt by those who remained. Schools in particular could not always find the means to survive without a fairly substantial constituency from which to draw support. There was also the financial drain on communities as businesses were closed, their former owners departing.[114] Educated youth also wished to move elsewhere for work and for greater freedom from the confines of their own community and from those felt to be imposed by the state. In addition, marrying outside the community, was becoming more commonplace, largely with spouses from other Christian communities, but also, with possibly more serious consequences, with Muslim partners.

However, of equal if not greater concern was the ever-present threat of violence and war, contributing to the desire to quit the region definitively. The Civil War in Lebanon (1975–1990) was a serious blow to those who believed that it was possible for Christians and Muslims to reach a fairly harmonious arrangement as regards the governance of such a *mélange* of ethnic and religious communities. The collapse of law and order made the prospect of

emigration more inviting or even necessary; all the Christian communities eventually lost great numbers of their adherents as they left for Europe or the Americas. Nor was it simply a struggle of Christian against Muslim: the Armenians, for example, had not wished to identify themselves with some of the Maronite militias who had requested them to show solidarity against the Muslim forces and so preserve the integrity of Lebanon as they understood it. The Armenians were consequently under suspicion, for they continually and publicly declared their wish for dialogue between the warring parties to resolve the issues that had caused the conflict. The most articulate in this respect was Catholicos Karekin II Sarkissian who repeatedly stressed the neutrality of his people.

The unsettled situation in Lebanon and neighbouring states was often caused by the Israeli–Palestinian problem and further exacerbated by the presence of a great many displaced and disaffected Palestinians scattered throughout the region, as well as certain interested parties from beyond, with their varying agendas. The presence of Israel in the midst of the Arab and largely Muslim world has meant continuing anxiety for all concerned, but particularly for the hard-pressed Christian communities, who would be regarded by portions of the Muslim population at large as allies of the Christian West whose support for Israel has until fairly recently been almost uncritical. For the Armenians, there was the extra disadvantage, it could be said, that, of all the Christians of the region, they were not of Semitic stock.

These continuing sources of stress and the consequent departure of many members of the community have convinced the present Catholicos of Cilicia, Aram I, and as they had his immediate predecessor, Karekin II, that changes need to be introduced in the Church in order to cater to the needs of modern Armenian faithful. Catechesis should be encouraged, especially among the young, in order that their spiritual lives might be enriched as Christians, and that they may be worthy witnesses to Christ in their predominantly Muslim environment. It is hoped that they may become bridges between themselves and the local Islamic world, a world that has produced in recent decades a more militant tendency, especially among certain Muslim youth. Reacting not only against Western global military and technological power and certain moral values they find unacceptable, but often also against their own governments that they see as corrupt and not truly Islamic, such persons may find local Christians being offered them fortuitously as immediate and convenient objects for their outraged emotions. Such Christians need to be prepared both intellectually and spiritually for challenges from zealous Muslim individuals and groups.

However, within the Armenian Apostolic Church, it is said that there is some sympathy for changes even as regards the hallowed liturgical tradition, though no prelate publicly seems to spell these out in any detail. This reticence probably originates from concern about an over-reaction or even the birth of yet another schism on the part of those who can see no real need for changes in the Liturgy or how the Church manages its affairs. Much is

invested within that Liturgy, which, with the Armenian language itself, has, it is widely agreed, helped preserve the identity of the 'nation' in the past. There is already much controversy over this matter,[115] as there is over the question as to whether the Church should have a Constitution or not, or whether to declare the victims of the Genocide as Christian 'martyrs'. There is also the question of the role of women in the Church generally, as well as the possible revival of the Order of Deaconesses in particular.

Ecumenical exchange, however, seems to have a high priority, especially as the approach of the Eastern Orthodox and the Church of Rome to the Oriental Orthodox Churches is now more irenic than was previously the case. Indeed, dialogue in an official capacity, is beginning to be seen as vital, not only with other traditional Churches, but also, and particularly so in the context of the Middle East, with Islam. The Church can no longer operate in isolation, especially if it hopes to be a more effective witness to Christ within that context. Regrettably, as we have seen, tensions still arise from time to time between the two catholicosates, and, in the Middle East proper, between Antelias and the Armenian Catholic Church whose centre is also near Beirut. The great majority of the faithful on all sides, however, do not understand why this should be the case. They feel that the clergy themselves do not always look sympathetically on a number of their fellow Armenians whom they sometimes regard as not truly Armenian at all.

Finally, it could be argued that the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, with its focused task of maintaining an Armenian presence and interest in the Holy Places, is, therefore, in a sense, more or less secure in its future. Antelias, on the other hand, has a larger remit and one that still lies uncomfortably with that of Etchmiadzin. Similar to Californians who, though living in a zone prone to natural disaster, do not move elsewhere – and where considerable Armenian communities are in fact located – a number of Armenians will probably remain in the midst of the political, religious and economic volatility of the Middle East. They may thus prevent, it is to be hoped, a second exodus for the Cilician Catholicosate, and so help to maintain the Armenian Church as valued Christian presence in the region.

7 Eastern Orthodox Christianity in the Middle East

Sotiris Roussos

Entering the new millennium, Greek Orthodox Churches and communities have gone through major difficulties and transformations in world politics. In less than a century the international and regional environment where these Churches used to operate has radically changed. The experience of multi-ethnic empires, Byzantine or Ottoman, was replaced by the advent of nationalism, nation-states and sometimes ethnic-sectarian strife. The regional character of the Churches has also been changing with the increase of the role of the diasporic Church.

The Greek cultural tradition is deeply rooted in Middle Eastern history. The Byzantine Empire ruled the countries of the East Mediterranean basin until the sixth and seventh century. Although the heir of the Roman Empire, the Byzantine state formed its own character, more Greek than Roman. The emperor ruled through Greek-speaking civil servants and the great cities of the region, such as Alexandria and Antioch were centres of Greek culture.[1] Greek became the official language of both the Church and the state. Even after the Arab conquest the relations between Byzantium and the Caliphate did not cease. The correspondence between the Emperor Leo III and Caliph Omar II at the beginning of the eighth century illustrates these diplomatic as well as cultural ties.[2] The Greek scientific tradition also contributed to the development and progress of medical science, geography, astrology and alchemy in the medieval Arab world.[3]

The fall of Constantinople in 1453 was a decisive turning point in the history of Greek Orthodox Christendom. All non-Muslim minorities were divided into individual communities, *millet*, under the leadership of their own highest ecclesiastical authority. In the case of the Greek Orthodox community, the Patriarch of Constantinople became the religious as well as the civil head, *millet bashi*, of all Orthodox Christians within the Ottoman Empire, regardless of their race or language.[4] With the Ottoman conquest of the Arab Middle East, the Greek Orthodox communities came under the realm of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. By dominating the *millet* leadership, the Greek hierarchy extended Greek influence over the Greek Orthodox Orient.

The nineteenth century was marked by the flourishing of the non-Muslim

millets, the religious minorities in the Ottoman Middle East. The outstanding economic and social record of the Christian minorities can be explained by their participation in expanding sectors of the economy, the foreign protection they enjoyed, their favourable situation following various reforms in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt, their Western education and the help they acquired from their co-religionists outside the region.[5] The collapse of the Ottoman state brought the downfall of the *millets*. The Greek Orthodox Christian communities had to redefine their status in order to survive in an overwhelmingly Muslim surrounding.

Throughout the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century the Patriarchates of Jerusalem and Antioch faced similar if not identical problems: the issue of lay participation in Church affairs, the Russian Orthodox influence prior to 1917 and the ascent of Arab nationalism in the Middle East. In virtually every patriarchal election from 1872 onwards these issues surfaced and absorbed the interest and energy of not only the hierarchies of the particular Patriarchates, but of a whole network of ecclesiastics and policy makers as well. In that period the Patriarchates of Jerusalem and Alexandria were (and still are) administered by Greek hierarchies. The Patriarchate of Antioch (Damascus) was administered by an Arab Patriarch and an Arab majority at the Synod from 1899, but retained its close affiliation with the rest of the Greek Orthodox Churches.[6]

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire the indigenous Arab Orthodox communities had to choose among three main strategies. The first one was to separate themselves from human surroundings, even from other Christian communities, celebrating their distinctive character and opposing the other Christian groups with as much fervour as they separated themselves from the Muslim majority. The relationship between the Greek Orthodox and the Maronites is a case in point.[7]

The second strategy was to promote a notion of secular nationalism by downgrading the importance of their communal affiliation. In order to secure a position equal to that of Muslims, they raised the banner of common fatherland, language and history rather than religion. This strategy meant that religion was not constitutive of a society and that it had no political significance.[8] It also meant abandoning the communal organisation, and diminishing the influence of the Church. However before following this strategy, the Greek Orthodox communities had to experience internal strife between advocates of traditional communal distinctiveness and those promoting Arab nationalism.

The third strategy was the tendency to create a territorial base for the communal institution, perhaps under the protection of a foreign power.[9] The Maronite case illustrates this trend. As for the Greek Orthodox, the split of the Syrian Greek Orthodox Church into Lebanese and Syrian camps, during the French Mandate, contained elements of this third strategy. Nonetheless, the Greek Orthodox communities did not constitute the majority in any particular territory of either Syria or Palestine and hence they could not claim any territorial base or boundaries.

Outstanding features of Orthodox witness

In order to follow and evaluate the trajectory of the Greek Orthodox Church in the twentieth century, we shall reflect on three main features outlined by Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia, that is martyrdom, Diaspora and Orthodox renaissance movements.[10] During the first quarter of the twentieth century, the Orthodox Church was shaped by, first, the Russian Revolution and secondly, the Greek defeat in Asia Minor and the 'exchange of populations' between Greece and Turkey, in 1922.

After the Second World War the whole of the Orthodox Balkans were under socialist regimes, with the exception of Greece, and the Churches suffered immense persecution and severe limitations. Further events, such as the constant expulsion of the Greek Orthodox community from Istanbul and elsewhere in Turkey (the islands of Imvros and Tenedos) and the Turkish invasion in Cyprus in 1974, contributed to the pressure to which Orthodoxy has been subjected. The twentieth century was a period of martyrdom and peril for the Orthodox Churches.

The second feature, described by the Bishop of Diokleia, is that of Diaspora. The Greek Orthodox Church is increasingly becoming a diasporic Church and not a regional Church of the East. Large numbers of Orthodox migrants in the Americas, Western Europe and Australia have been the basis of flourishing Orthodox parishes and bishoprics. Moreover these diasporic Orthodox Churches demonstrate an ability to attract faithful through conversion from various forms of Protestantism especially in the United States. As A. McGrath noted, 'a faith community, which was once defined in ethnic terms, may well break out of the hitherto restricted role, and become a universal option within the global Christian market.[11]

Orthodox renaissance, the Philocalic renaissance, is the third feature described by Bishop Kallistos. He stressed the increasing emphasis on the study of Philokalia and the Hesychast tradition. This intellectual movement tried to move away from westernised academic and scholastic views of Orthodoxy to a very different theological approach. It makes use of major mystical authors of the middle and late Byzantine period, such as St Symeon the New Theologian and St Gregory Palamas. This trend underlined the importance of the Jesus prayer on a practical level. It also led to a renewal of monasticism since the 1970s in Mount Athos and since the 1990s in Eastern Europe. The movement envisaged monasticism as being both traditional and open to the world.[12]

Moments of martyrdom in the Near East

In the Middle East, the Arab–Israeli conflict and the civil strife in Lebanon are the most important moments of martyrdom and tragedy for the Arab Christian faithful and the Greek Orthodox Churches in particular. In the case of the Palestinian Orthodox the persecution has not been related to faith.

Unlike the Orthodox Church in Russia, the Greek Orthodox community in Palestine has not been persecuted because of its Christian faith. However, the 1948 war and the subsequent dislocation of the Palestinian population from their land is the central feature of Palestinian Christian persecution. Holy sites are the historical, tangible proof of the reality of salvation. However, the foundational myths of the State of Israel delineate, as G.-W. Falah pointed out, 'frontiers of exclusion', legitimising Jewish and repudiating Arab claims to the Holy Land.[13] For Palestinian Christians the desecration of sacred space was deliberate. According to John Watson, 'in eschatology and regional politics, location is everything.'[14]

Israeli occupation led to the social and economic dislocation of Christian Palestinians and the Orthodox Palestinians in particular. In his most interesting study on Palestinian Christian demography, Bernard Sabella demonstrated how vulnerable the Palestinian Christians are to pressure to emigrate. By 1991, the estimated number of Christians who had emigrated reached 18,000 or 40 per cent of the Christian population in the West Bank including East Jerusalem.[15] Holy Land Christians constitute less than 2 per cent of the total combined population of Israel/Palestine, compared with 15 per cent in 1948.[16] In Israel the Christians were estimated in 1949 at 21. 3 per cent of the non-Jewish population but by 1990 they were about 12 per cent.[17]

Under Israeli occupation and turbulent relations with Arab regimes the Palestinians, and more importantly Christian Palestinians, redefined their position by raising the banner of secular nationalism over communal identity and sectarianism. Middle-class Christian Palestinians became the leading advocates of the nationalism, secularisation and radicalisation of the Palestinian national struggle. In general the political terminology, slogans and methods of the post-1967 Palestinian groups indicated a break with domination by the traditional elites. Several leaders of militant leftist groups were middle-class Christian Palestinians. They also acquired command positions in the inner councils of the Palestinian national movement.[18]

The Christians in the Holy Land have always felt responsible for guarding and preserving the Holy Places as part of their identity. The Christian communities had played an important role in the Arab concept of Palestine. The Greek Orthodox contribution to this concept as distinct from that of Syria was significant. Their leading paper, *Filastin*, founded by the Orthodox Al-Isa brothers in Jaffa, was an advocate of the distinct concept of Palestine since 1911. Palestine for them was the area under the authority of the Greek Orthodox Church of Jerusalem. Their alienation from the Holy Land was a salient feature of their martyrdom. Even during the Mandate period the Palestinian Christians, particularly the Greek Orthodox, were in the forefront against the selling of land to the Jews, considering it as the greatest contribution to the success of Zionist plans.[19] Greek Orthodox Arabs were part and parcel of Palestinian Arab nationalism. As Mitri Raheb noted, Palestinian Arab Christians have no separatist movement that traces its roots to a culture or history other than the Arab, such as those of the Maronites and Assyrians.[20]

However, in the case of the Greek Orthodox community, the martyrdom of the faithful contradicts starkly with the attitude of their mother Church. The Greek ecclesiastical hierarchy, for its part, never accepted the changes and developments that occurred in the Orthodox Church after the fall of Byzantium, that is the emergence of various autonomous Churches in the Balkans. Alexander Schmemann pointed out that none of the Greek upper clergy, in either Constantinople or Jerusalem, incorporated these developments into their own Church world image. On the contrary, they tend to identify the Greek Orthodox Church with the Greek (national) Church, denying that other Orthodox Churches (Russian, Serbian or Arab) are also part of the essence of the Greek Orthodox Church. This is by no means a phenomenon that appears exclusively in the Greek upper clergy. During the nineteenth century there were parallel trends of religious nationalism among the Slavic Church as well.[21]

The centuries-long history of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate under Islamic rule led to the formation of a certain attitude in Church–state relations among the members of the Greek Orthodox upper clergy. The Patriarchate closely co-operated with state policies in political, social and economic spheres in exchange for Church autonomy in its internal matters. The *millet* system of the Ottoman Empire institutionalised this behaviour, which became the main guideline of the Patriarchate's policy towards the state.

During the Mandate period the struggle for greater control over the Patriarchate led the community to seek an alliance with the Muslims. Land sales by the Patriarchate to Zionist land development companies during the Mandate period were at the core of the struggle. In this struggle, the traditional leadership preferred co-operation with the British stressing the communal Greek Orthodox identity. On the other hand there was a younger generation of Arab Orthodox who stressed their Arab identity and supported Arab unity. Their strategy was to promote a notion of secular nationalism by downgrading the importance of their communal affiliation.

After the 1967 war and the election of the Likud coalition in 1977 power was passed over to policy makers whose main priority was to facilitate the programs of Jewish settlements in and around Jerusalem and to ensure Israeli Jewish predominance in Jerusalem. This policy tended to ignore or to underestimate the position and interests of the various Churches in the Holy Land.[22] The eruption of the *Intifada* in 1987 changed the situation for the Palestinian Christians, and the Greek Orthodox Palestinians in particular. The national struggle against Israeli rule strengthened the radicals of the community. Now demands for 'nationalisation' of the Church were included in the national agenda. The Patriarchate continued selling lands in Israel and Jerusalem during the 1970s and 1980s. However, Church land was part of the land of Palestine and any tampering with this land was to be considered as treason. The Arab Orthodox Initiative Committee in 1992 revived the demands and claims against the Patriarchate, and beliefs about the

usurpation of Arab Orthodox rights by the Greek upper clergy prevailed again in the community.[23]

Both pressure by the Palestinian *Intifada* and the change of Israeli priorities and policy-making led the Patriarchate to a major break with its tradition of co-operating with state policy for internal autonomy. In April 1987, Patriarch Diodoros joined other heads of Churches in signing a statement showing their concern and anxiety about the state of affairs in the Occupied Territories and actually condemning Israeli policy on the matter. There is no adequate evidence as to whether the signing of the document was a mere tactic. Officially, the Patriarchate always stated its concern about the Palestinian issue and its support for the Palestinians. With the *Intifada* in full swing, political Islam was strengthened. The failure of the Oslo Process to provide a tangible amelioration for everyday Palestinians helped increase the influence of radical political Islam, enabling them to enforce Islamic rule on society, particularly in Gaza. Such a rule weakened the commitment of the PLO for a secular, democratic state and made many Christian families seek to emigrate.[24]

The Palestinian Greek Orthodox community met three major challenges: first, Zionism and the Palestinian drama, alienation from their Holy Land and deprivation of their identity; second, Arab nationalism and a secular notion of an Arab nation based on language, culture and history, which, however was contradicted by the religious nationalism of their Greek hierarchy; and third, radical political Islam as a majority reaction to the socio-political misfortunes of the Middle East, threatening their vision for a secular state.[25]

Responding to these challenges the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate failed to articulate and to develop a theology towards the State of Israel and the Palestinian cause. Due to its strategy of co-operating with the state, it failed to make inroads in both the Palestinian and the Jewish people and thus to contribute to what Naim Ateek pointed out, as 'a more inclusive understanding of God and a deeper understanding of the Bible by emphasizing more responsible criteria, especially for the interpretation of the Old Testament.'[26]

Nor has a dialogue been articulated between the Muslim and Christian traditions by the Greek Orthodox Church in Jerusalem in the modern era, despite the fact that the Eastern Orthodox Church has developed, through centuries of silent coexistence, a variety of forms of dialogue. The values of justice and moderation as well as the role of youth and education in disseminating these values could have been at the centre of a theology towards Islam in the region.[27]

A distinctive element in the case of Syria is the absence of a substantial Greek ethnic community, in contrast to Egypt, or of a Greek hierarchy, such as in Israel/Palestine. From the beginning of the twentieth century it had an Arab local hierarchy and an Arab Patriarch in contrast to the Greek hierarchy of the other Orthodox Patriarchates. The Arab character of the Patriarchate of Antioch was the result of a long conflict between the Greek

clergy, whose power emanated from the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Greek state, and the Arab clergy and laity, who were supported by Russia.[28]

Throughout the nineteenth century, and despite the political changes such as the *Tanzimat* and the promulgation and abolition of the 1876 constitution, which brought certain political problems and disturbances in the Ottoman territories, the Greek Orthodox community of Syria, and particularly that of Beirut, enjoyed social equilibrium and relative harmony. The role of the Orthodox Church as a harmoniser of social conflict within the community was instrumental in the rise and the prosperity of the community.

Turning to the identity of the Greek Orthodox community, it is complex and multi-dimensional. At the end of the nineteenth century the community felt that spiritually they formed part of the Eastern Orthodox world. They also saw themselves as indigenous people and hence Arabs, or 'arabised' through history. Last, but not least, they felt part of the Ottoman Empire.

At the end of the nineteenth century some Christian Arab intellectuals deplored the decline of Arab societies and civilisation, which was mainly due to the non-Arab, Turkish, domination and called for an Arab quasi-secular revival.[29] In the *Al Mahabbat*, the official review of the Arab Orthodox communal organisation, the expressions related to identity included *watan* (homeland), *ummah* (community), *bilad* (country), *souriyyat* (Syria) or *arab* (Arab), associated at the same time with the general term *al jamiat al outhmaniyya*, that is the Ottoman world.[30]

The major crisis in the Patriarchate of Antioch from 1928 to 1932 over the succession of Patriarch Gregorios can be seen as a fine example illustrating the complex character of such crises in the region and unveiling the interweaving socio-economic and political factors behind them. It gives also a picture of the Greek Orthodox Church and community and of their political and social relations.[31]

This crisis has been seen as the product of antagonism between the Orthodox notables of Damascus and those of Beirut. However, this antagonism acquired a political character, becoming a conflict between Arab Nationalists, Damascene notables and their rather pro-French Lebanese counterparts. The separation of the state of Lebanon from Syria, since the French Mandate, gave a significant role to Orthodox Beirut notables such as the Trad family. After the collapse of Emir Faysal's plans to establish an Arab Kingdom in Syria in 1921, the Lebanese notables preferred a compromise with the Mandate.

The absence of a protecting power explains in part the turn of the Syrian Greek Orthodox to Arabism. France was always seen as the protector of Catholic interests in the Levant. The intensive activities of Catholic circles with their political mainstay in Paris posed a threat to the Greek Orthodox who had been left without protection after the collapse of Imperial Russia. Among the younger generation of inarticulate Orthodox Syrian nationalists who had graduated from the Syrian Protestant College there was a strong feeling against the domination of both the Maronites and French culture.[32]

They saw in the Church crisis of the late 1920s an effort of the French Mandate to detach Lebanon from Syria.

Approaching independence, the Greek Orthodox community walked a thin line between Arab-Syrian nationalism and Lebanon's uniqueness as a place where East and West could meet on an equal footing. As described eloquently by K. Salibi, Lebanese and Syrian Greek Orthodox intellectuals, such as Constantine Zurayk, found in Arab nationalism, as an expression of patriotism, a political platform.[33] Moreover, the Greek Orthodox were dispersed in all the Levant and not restricted to Lebanon, with the Greek Orthodox community in Syria bigger than that of Lebanon. For many members of the Greek Orthodox community, nationalism was a 'code word' for the defense of the unity of the land of Syria. Nowhere were they a majority and, thus, they did not feel any sort of particularism similar to that of the Maronites. Nonetheless, religious identity is central in their communal self-identification.[34] Secondly, their ecclesiastical history had experienced painful dislocations by political fragmentation, from the Byzantine era until the Great War.[35] Political movements such as the *Syrian Nationalist Party* of Antun Saadeh, advocating Syrian nationalism and Greater Syria, became popular among the Greek Orthodox in the 1930s.[36]

In the years of the Lebanese civil strife the *Qaumi Suri* (Greater Syria) party and its militia acquired a strong profile in Orthodox areas.[37] The Lebanese civil war has been usually oversimplified as a Muslim-versus-Christian war. Most scholars, however, look to the civil conflict in Lebanon as a multi-faceted, multi-layered phenomenon.[38] Alignments often superseded communal boundaries and the various factions shifted alliances very often. The Phalanges, for instance attacked more than once both the Armenians and the Greek Orthodox, who in their turn allied with the Druze against the Maronites. The Greek Orthodox are an urban community living in harmony with the neighbouring Sunni Muslim population, identifying themselves with Arab nationalism. The Palestinian issue was a catalyst for the developments in Lebanon, more so since the stance towards the Palestinians was determined by the answer of the Lebanese to the question as to whether he/she felt Arab or not.[39] The Greek Orthodox felt part of the Arab identity of Lebanon and their alliances usually shifted accordingly.

There are, however, those Greek Orthodox Lebanese who view Lebanon as a unique meeting point of East and West. The career of Charles Malik, a Greek Orthodox philosopher and academic, epitomises this trend. As Kenneth Cragg noted, in Malik's vision, Lebanon should be free and secure, Christian, mediating between East and West, 'in the dimension of transcendence with Islam'. In defending his vision, Malik tried to secure US protection and resist Abd al-Nasser's Pan-arabism. However, the attempt of Camille's government – in which Malik was Foreign Minister – to align Lebanon with the West, provoked the 1958 crisis and war between the communities.[40]

Diaspora: from ethnic communities to faith communities?

We turn now to the second feature described by Bishop Kallistos: the Diaspora. Michael Humphrey argues that '. . . the term diaspora has come into vogue in the last decade because it captures the ambiguities of contemporary social belonging.' He continues,

> 'Diaspora refers to a form of social relations produced by the displacement from home. It implies a very conventional anthropological perspective on social life, the persistence of tradition (identity) despite its displacement from its place of origin. It fits within the old dichotomy between tradition and modernity in which the anticipated loss of tradition is resisted. Yet current usage of the term includes not only the persistence of tradition (identity) as a product of collective resistance to cultural loss but also qualified acceptance by the host society.'[41]

After the Mandate, the cases of the Syrian and Lebanese Greek Orthodox community in Diaspora can be seen as examples of E. Gellner's Diaspora nationalism which '. . . [endeavours] to shed both its [communal] specialisation and its minority status and create a state of its own, as the new protector of a now . . . newly national culture.'[42] Despite the fact that the immigrants from the Levant identify themselves as either Syrians or Lebanese, their communal organisation and press differentiated along confessional lines. It seems, though, that, in Argentina, the Maronites tend to be self-identified as Lebanese and the Greek Orthodox as Syrians.

Khalil and Antun Saadeh, Syrian nationalists in the Diaspora, are interesting study cases. They belonged to the Greek Orthodox community, and shared their community experience, and pleaded unity of the *Bilad al-Sham*. Such ideologues were advocating the division of religion and politics and radical social change in Syria so as to follow the Western world. However Khalil Saadeh maintained that in doing so, Syrian people could find aspects of modern civilisation in their own past and history and thus modernisation is not alien but authentic. Secondly, he urged his compatriots to participate in world civilisation on the same terms as much as the rest of the Western world, without an inferiority complex. Last, but not least, he says, they saw the leading force of the social transformation in Syria as an educated middle class, and not as a sectarian elite.[43] Notwithstanding their focus on their motherland, Diaspora nationalists are eager to participate in world civilisation and thus in modernity and to find in their tradition the means to sustain this participation.

The role of the Lebanese Diaspora for Lebanon is tremendous. According to David Munir Nabti, most estimates put the current population in Lebanon between three and four million people. The Lebanese population abroad is more difficult to measure, but most people estimate that between 16 and 20 million people of Lebanese descent live around the world. Moreover at the

end of the period 1998–2003 the remittances reached 2.75 billion dollars, about 15 per cent of the country's GDP.[44] The impact on the other hand of the Lebanese civil war on identity formation in the Armenian diasporia in Lebanon was very important. Lebanese abroad mobilised in support of their communities back in Lebanon, which many of them have never known, let alone visited. According to Humphrey, 'the post war exodus has fragmented the Lebanese Diaspora into communalism, which in turn assumes the form of ethnicities in the host society.'[45]

For the Christians in the Holy Land emigration was an even larger problem than that of Syria-Lebanon, more so since it led to near extinction of Christian communities in Israel/Palestine. According to Agnes Hanania, throughout the twentieth century, 85 per cent of the Christians have emigrated. Moreover, in the mid-1990s 22 per cent of the Christian population in the Holy Land had an interest in emigration, owing mainly to fear and insecurity and the search for an acceptable income.[46] Greek Orthodox Palestinians, like the rest of the Palestinian Christian community, fit the model of a migrant community. High educational qualifications acquired in Western schools, relatively high living standards and ties with relatives abroad are the main characteristics of Christian Palestinians.[47]

Developments in Israel/Palestine have increased identification and mobilization of Orthodox Palestinians around causes related to their faith, Church and tradition in the Holy Land. Apart from feeling part of an extended domain of their fatherland they also feel part of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem faithful. Their endeavour to recover or preserve their ethnic identity against the experience of cross-generational attrition in assimilating societies, and of the impact of globalisation and, most importantly, to maintain their contemporary identification with a shared national story and struggle, is closely tied with the struggle to 'arabise' their home Church. The formation of the *Task Force* in the USA by Arab Orthodox, aiming at conducting a campaign against the Greek domination in the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, is a case in point.

The ethnic-sectarian identification and solidarity of Diasporas has been challenged and to a certain extent eroded by new types of solidarity: first, spiritual solidarities in the form of either interpretation of eastern spirituality being adopted in the West or of an emphatic commitment to communalistic ventures, and religious 'fundamentalism'; secondly, the growth of material solidarities, such as global classes, especially in the financial sector, computer programming and other types of 'symbolic analysis'; thirdly, the emergence of humanist solidarities such as the global civil society, the thousands of non-governmental organisations; and finally, life-emancipating solidarities, that is, individual freedom to pursue ways of life and choices.[48]

Against these trends, the cosmic scope of Orthodox theology attempts to discover the right balance between the national and the universal elements present in the Church.[49] Orthodoxy might offer a fundamental theological alternative to the West and change in a revolutionary manner the geometry of

Orthodoxy and ecumenism.[50] As Alexander Schmemann outlined, from the 1960s, 'although still divided along national "juridical" lines the American born children of Orthodox immigrants tend to overcome the narrow nationalistic boundaries, especially in the field of education and theology'. He maintained that substantial Orthodox literature is published in English for the needs of the Orthodox faithful and there are a number of Orthodox theologians who originate from other confessional communities, and their contribution transcends categories such as 'Greek', 'Russian' or 'Arab'.[51]

Movements of renaissance

The main endeavour of renaissance movements in Orthodoxy was to override ethnic/sectarian boundaries of the Church and to construct a new spirituality, which would search for internal unity on the one hand and harmony with the world on the other, while both should be in conformity with an appeal to the transfiguration of the Cosmos and the deification of the Human.[52]

In 1942 a group of Orthodox young people in Lebanon, who had been educated in Catholic schools, were frustrated with the poor intellectual and spiritual life of their community. In the words of one of the group members, Georges Khodr, the Greek Orthodox Church and community was merely a social and juridical group having its own institutions and ethnic mentality, which was built by the *millet* system of the Ottoman Empire. Being Greek Orthodox associates someone with a certain political and social status, but by no means refers to what someone believes. This group of young Orthodox was the founder of the Orthodox Youth Movement, with main bases in Beirut and Latakia. The founders strongly believed that a movement was the only way to renew inspiration in Orthodoxy. Collective action in education, publication and dissemination of ideas could intensify the spiritual life of the Orthodox community. In order to penetrate the soul of contemporary Orthodoxy the Movement was convinced that, firstly, Orthodoxy possessed within itself whatever is necessary for a complete spiritual life and secondly, that ethnic Orthodoxy was bankrupt.[53]

The movement was also a revolution against the ethnic Orthodoxy of the past. The affirmation of the Orthodox communal self relies on perpetual Orthodoxy, its Eastern-ness and Arab-ness. The legitimisation of this ethnic Orthodoxy has been based on a periodisation of its history in a period of grandeur, that is, mostly Byzantium, and a period of decadence and decline. Exaltation and pride in the remote glorious period were, for the movement partisans, signs of the inability of the traditional elites and their ethnic Orthodoxy to meet external and internal challenges to the Greek Orthodox community. The movement's journal, *al-Nour*, maintained that the community should acknowledge the present decline and decadence in order to avoid being trapped in it.[54]

For the traditional mentality of the community, idealisation of certain historical periods was the representation of another world, a world of the

past, which was projected into the future in the form of a dream or hope. This world determined certain forms of Church organisation, certain language and certain culture. For the Orthodox Youth Movement, Orthodoxy could not stay feeble and fixed but should become what it had been historically, active and innovative. Whatever is fixed and without movement is not Orthodox. For the young Orthodox the choice was between the attachment to a paralysing past, on the one hand, and liberation through experience in the Church, on the other. They pointed out that the history of the Orthodox Church is full of tears and blood because throughout history there has been indifference towards the experience of the Church and attachment to personal, family or sectarian identities.

The Orthodox Youth Movement was active in setting up educational centres throughout Syria and Lebanon and thus in producing a number of young people with spiritual formation who would provide the next generation of clergy and upper clergy. Moreover, an Orthodox renaissance movement focused also in the revival of monasticism. The Hesychast renewal in Eastern Europe and Greece brought a regeneration of monasticism on Mount Athos and, since the Soviet collapse, in Russia and Romania. As Timothy Ware noted, Orthodoxy needs 'a rigorous and loving monasticism both traditional and open to the world'.[55] The Movement growth led to a revival of monastic life in Lebanon, both in Beirut and in Tripoli.

It also led to the rise of centres of theological study such as the Theological Academy of Balamand.[56] However, intervention of the Syrian state and international politics led to a fragmentation of the Antiochene Church in the 1960s, between those allegiants who look to Moscow for renewal and those who favour the Orthodox Youth Movement.[57] Pressure by the Syrian regime led to the change of the name of the organisation from the Youth Orthodox Movement to 'Sunday Schools'. The term 'movement' was reminiscent of political organisation and thus contrary to Baathist ideology against sectarian political organisations.

Concluding remarks

The life and witness of the Orthodox Church in the twentieth century has been marked by the collapse of the Ottoman empire and the advent of nationalism and of the search for nation-states in the Middle East. Under these circumstances most Greek Orthodox identified themselves with the Arabic language, and Arab history, heritage and culture as their own milieu. In taking part in the national struggles and civil strife, the Arab Orthodox communities had to face questions as to how to reconcile their adherence to Arab history and heritage with Islam. They turned to secular nationalism, downplaying the role of religion and the Church in the formation of their identity. Martyrdom was not, however, approached as a purification process led by forgiveness and realistic compassion. Orthodoxy, be it religious nationalism of the Greek hierarchy in Jerusalem, Palestinian struggles

to 'arabise' their home Church or 'ethnic' Orthodoxy in Lebanon, is facing the danger '. . . of turning into something negative, defensive and condemnatory'.[58]

A series of tragedies in the Middle East has led to serious dislocation of Christian communities and to massive Christian emigration. There is certainly a danger of Christianity's depopulation in the region, but, on the other hand, the diasporic Orthodox Church can overcome ethnic boundaries and transcend homeland nationalisms, by providing its cosmic scope Orthodox theology, and by attempting to discover the right balance between the national and the universal elements present in the Church.

The Orthodox renaissance movement in the Middle East declined to understand the Church as an auxiliary force for building up national identities or as a juridical body of a particular community in the struggle for state power sharing. It advocated an ever-innovative nature of a Church, which could override family, communal and ethnic identities. True liberation and Church renaissance, could, in the movement's view, be attained only through communion, interpersonal relationships and true prayer. Despite the analogies between the developments in the Orthodox Church in Eastern and South-eastern Europe and those in Middle Eastern Orthodoxy, relentless pressures by the Arab–Israeli conflict, authoritarian regimes, the rise of political Islam and regional politics pose tremendous restraints to a revival of Orthodoxy in its cradle.

8 Between Rome and Antioch: The Syrian Catholic Church in the modern Middle East

Anthony O'Mahony

Syrian Catholicism until 1781 [1]

The origins of the Syrian Catholic Church are in the eighteenth century, when it emerged from the Syrian Orthodox Church;[2] however the two churches of Antioch and Rome had developed good relations during and immediately after the period of the Latin Crusader states.[3] In 1129 a newly elected Syrian Patriarch was consecrated in a Latin church. Another was invited to the Third Lateran Council in 1179 to deliver a treatise on the Cathars – the 'heresy of the west'. However the relationship between the two traditions was not one way, an intellectual renaissance in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in the Syrian Church owed something to contact with the Latin West.[4] Conversely, the Latin West benefited from the diffusion of translations of Syriac texts, Thomas Aquinas read Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Latin exegesis shows the influence of Antiochene exegesis. In the thirteenth century negotiations between Pope Innocent IV and Syrian Patriarch Ignatius III appeared to be sufficiently advanced for the Syrian Church to be invited to the Council of Reconciliation at Lyons in 1245. The refusal of the Latin Church to recognize ecclesial autonomy finally led to the failure of the enterprise. There was also a decree of union between Syrian Orthodox and Rome some two hundred years later at the Council of Florence (*Multa et Admirabilia* of 30 November 1444), but this also came to nothing.[5]

Jesuit and Capuchin missionaries began to work among the Syrian Orthodox at Aleppo in 1626. So many Syrians were received into communion with Rome that in 1662, when the Patriarchate had fallen vacant, the Catholic party was able to elect one of its own, André Akhidjan, as Patriarch. This provoked a split in the community, and after Akhidjan's death in 1677 two opposed patriarchs were elected, an uncle and nephew, representing the two parties. But when the Catholic Patriarch died in 1702, this brief line of Syrian Catholic Patriarchs died out with him. The Ottoman government supported the Oriental Orthodox against the Catholics, and throughout the 18th century the Catholic Syrians underwent much suffering and persecution. There were long periods when no Syrian Catholic bishops were functioning, and the community was forced underground.

The combination of Latin missionary presence and the position of the Syrian Orthodox Church in the Ottoman Empire resulted in a lasting union with Rome in 1783.[6] Before this time, opposition to Catholicism among the clergy and laity of the Syrian Orthodox Church was fierce. The Maronite Church also took an active part in the enterprise, which was further favoured by the existence of three rivals for the Syrian Patriarchate.[7] So it was in 1656 that André Akhijan (1662–1677), a Syrian from Mardin converted to Catholicism, was consecrated as the first Syrian Catholic bishop by the Maronite Patriarch. In 1662, he was officially recognized as patriarch by the Ottoman authorities, although it would be 1677 before his investiture by Rome. The fledgling Church was, from the first, strongly influenced by France as a result of the circumstances surrounding its birth: the new Patriarch wrote to Louis XIV in 1663 to ask for his protection; and its detractors would exploit this situation.[8]

Union between Rome and the Syrian Orthodox Church however, did not find the success counted on by its promoters in the Syrian milieu, and the new Church took more than a century to really take root. The Syrian Orthodox Church authorities, under pressure from other churches opposed to the Catholic movement, mobilized the Ottoman administration against the Syrian Catholics by denouncing them as foreign agents. In fact, the harassment and persecution of the authorities left them with no other solution than to solicit the open protection of France, which justified the accusations brought against them. Some Catholic bishops saw no future other than a return to the Syrian Orthodox Church, where they raged against their former co-religionists to ensure that their brief treachery was forgotten. Others fled to Lebanon to put themselves under the protection of the Druze–Maronite emirs. Catholic expansion did not really begin again until the end of the eighteenth century from the Lebanese bastion of Charfeh, around which the Syrian Church was reconstituted in 1783.

During the seventeenth century, individual Syrian Orthodox bishops, under the guidance of Roman Catholic missionaries, recognized the supremacy of Rome. These unions were of a local and temporary nature. As the number of Roman Catholic missionaries increased, the logistical framework and ecclesiastical context for a wider and more comprehensive union with the Syrian Orthodox emerged. A second factor contributing to union was the political situation of Syrian Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire, in which each minority, whether of a religious or national character, was a self-governing *millet* or 'nation', provided that the sultan recognized the *millet* as distinct. Each Christian *millet* was ruled by a patriarch, and the bishops and clergy assumed civil duties, the most important of which was the collection of taxes and the administration of justice both in ecclesiastical and to a limited extent in civil law. From the establishment of the *millet* system in the fifteenth century to 1882, the Syrian Orthodox Church was not granted the status of independent *millet* but was considered part of the Armenian *millet*. Hence, the Syrian Orthodox Church depended on the decisions of the Armenian

Patriarch of Constantinople.[9] This arrangement was not in the best interest of the Syrian Orthodox Church, which had suffered precipitous decline since the advent of Ottoman rule.[10]

On the death of Akhijan in 1677, French diplomacy put forward as his successor the Syrian Catholic Bishop of Jerusalem (who would become Patriarch Pierre IV Sahbadin 1678–1702). However, the opposing candidate put forward by the Syrian Orthodox Church gained recognition from the Ottoman authorities, and persecution aimed at the 'Patriarch of the French' and his followers led them to form even closer links with France against their adversaries. Pierre IV died in exile early in the eighteenth century, and his successor, Isaac ben (Basilios) Jubair (1703–1721), was forced to take up residence in the French mission in Istanbul before being permanently exiled. With his death in 1721 in Rome the line of succession of Syrian Catholic Patriarchs was broken until 1783. In the intervening period a number of bishops returned to the Syrian Orthodox Church they had left, others were driven from their sees, and some found exile in the mountains of Lebanon. During the Lebanese exile the Syrian Catholic Church was free to reorganize, thanks to the support of France, the Maronite Church, and the Druze Emirs. Events changed somewhat in its favour towards the end of the eighteenth century, when a number of Syrian Orthodox dignitaries and monasteries embraced union with Rome.[11]

Syrian Catholic Church in the late Ottoman period: the first patriarchs – a time of instability [12]

This work of reorganization of the eighteenth century bore fruit, once again in Aleppo.[13] In 1781, the Syrian Orthodox patriarch Ignace XXVIII George IV,[14] enthroned in 1768, died in Mardin. A lengthy vacancy ensued. The archbishop of Aleppo, Michel Jarwé, who had been influenced by Latin missionaries, declared union with Rome. Four other bishops followed, who then elected Jarwé to be patriarch at Mardin, the administrative centre of the Syrian Orthodox Church, as successor to Patriarch George IV. Pope Pius VI (1775–1799) sent Jarwé the pallium on 15 December 1782 in formal acceptance of the union. However, the Syrian Orthodox Church had already elected Patriarch Ignace XXIX Matthew (1782–1817), bishop of Mosul, who was in control of the patriarchate in Mardin when Jarwé and his party arrived. Sought by the Ottoman authorities and the Syrian Orthodox hierarchy, Jarwé fled to Baghdad and later to Mount Lebanon.[15] Jarwé founded the monastery of 'Our Lady of Deliverance' at Charfeh, which also became his patriarchal residence, and it was from there that he led the Syrian Catholic Church until his death on 4 September 1800. The pro-union succession was preserved due to the four other bishops who also joined the union with Rome and it is this line that continues to the present Catholic Patriarch of Antioch of the Syrians.[16]

The death of Ignace Michel Jarwé led to a difficult succession.[17] Five days

after his death, the Syrian bishops elected Cyril Behnam, Archbishop of Mosul, Patriarch, despite his absence. But Cyril abdicated almost immediately, and Ignace Michel Daher was elected in his place. He was confirmed by the Holy See and received the pallium on 20 December 1802. He quickly ran into difficulties whilst staying at Charfeh where he was accused of squandering the monastery's property. He also requested to transfer the Syrian Patriarchal See to Aleppo, the town where he had been a priest prior to his patriarchal election. He resigned his post in September 1810 and transferred to the See of Aleppo. Gandolfi, who was the Apostolic Delegate to Lebanon, informed the Propaganda Fide in February 1812. His resignation was judged to be invalid: however, it was finally accepted. Daher had been accused of having resigned in order to escape the obligation of returning the Charfeh property.[18]

On 13 January 1814, Ignace Simeon Hindi Zora, Archbishop of Damascus was elected Patriarch. He was confirmed and received the pallium on 8 March 1818. His Patriarchate was clouded by many dissensions within the Syrian episcopacy. In 1816, Hindi asked the Propaganda Fide if he could send priests of the Patriarchal clergy into all the Syrian dioceses. By doing so he ran up against opposition of several bishops. In 1816 he asked that Daher, his predecessor, be removed from Aleppo, accusing him of scandalous conduct. He was also in conflict with the Archbishop of Jerusalem, Peter Jarwé, who particularly criticized him for the election of Bishop Homsy.[19] Jarwé, among other things, had been accused by Gandolfi of being a 'trouble-maker' due to his legal action taken against another Bishop, Jules Antony Amedina. It should be noted that these legal endeavours between bishops and patriarchs were not new, the *Acta* of Propaganda mentioned Bishop Moses Sabbag, deposed by Ignace Michel Jarwé. From 1790, Sabbag protested against this sacking and his complaints returned to the Congregation in 1801, and again in 1812; he finally obtained his restitution in 1818.[20] Ignace Simeon Hindi Zora resigned on 23 May 1817. Gandolfi accepted his resignation and Propaganda Fide gave its agreement on 1 June 1818. In the meantime, Denys Michel Hadaja, Bishop of Aleppo, had been elected Patriarchal Vicar on 1 June 1817; he was confirmed in this office by Propaganda Fide on 1 June 1818.

The Syrian Catholic Church under Patriarch Peter Ignace Jarwé

The Archbishop of Jerusalem,[21] Peter Jarwé, nephew of Patriarch Ignace Michel Jarwé, had made a long journey to Europe.[22] Returning to Syria in 1820, he visited Gandolfi and then met a synod composed of four bishops. There he was elected Patriarch on 25 February 1820 and took the name Ignatius Peter Jarwé. The Apostolic Delegate informed the Congregation on 12 March 1820. This case was closely examined, not just because of the candidate's history of difficult relations with members of his church which

caused some anxiety, but above all because his journey to Europe and Britain had given rise to serious suspicion.[23]

Jarwé, in fact, had undertaken the long journey with a view to finding funds to be able to print Syriac liturgical books expunged of all error. Being in England, and wishing to obtain Syriac typeface from the British government, he got into contact with what the Congregation called 'the Biblical sect' [The Bible Society], who were suspected of playing a key role in the Protestant movement of the Middle East.[24] Some however had defended Jarwé and the Apostolic Delegate to England himself viewed him favourably.

Whatever the reason, Jarwé was not confirmed. Given his insistence he was required in 1824 to go to Rome. He contented himself with sending a representative, whom the Congregation refused to accept. Finally in 1826 Propaganda decided that his election was invalid and that he had no place to ask for confirmation of the Roman Pontiff. The details of this judgement are interesting: Propaganda wanted him to resign but at the same time confirmed that if he would not give his resignation, the reality would be the same by default of confirmation. It should be noted here that the formula of confirmation of the first Syrian patriarchs always contains the caveat 'cum sanatione omnium et quoruncumque etiam substantialium defectuum, si qui quomodolibet in ipsa electione vel postulatione intervenerint'.[25] One of the motives cited for non-confirmation was that the election of the Syrian Patriarch was reserved to the Holy See. It is worth mentioning an interesting comment (or *votum*) of contemporary Roman canon lawyer Prosper Piatti, in which he replies to the objection that the reservation to the Holy See is a law of the Rules of the Chancery, which dated to John XXII, that is, only until the beginning of the fourteenth century and that, as such, it did not oblige the Eastern Churches who were not constrained by canon law after the Photian schism. Piatti states, on the contrary, that the reservation is a necessary consequence of pontifical supremacy, which is by divine, not ecclesiastical right, as the Council of Florence proves, by stating, 'Our Lord Jesus Christ gave St Peter the full power to tend, rule, and govern the universal Church'.[26]

Jarwé, however, was not convinced by the decision of the Congregation, and went directly to the Pope, bringing to his plea several letters from Syrian priests in his favour and against the patriarchal vicar and bishop of Aleppo, Hadaja. Leo XII put his request back into the hands of Propaganda, requesting that they listen to the appellant. On 6 January 1827 Hadaja died and the whole question was reopened. Several took up the defence of Jarwé and tried to show his good faith in the business of his contacts with the Bible Society. Others, such as the Maronite Patriarch, remained suspicious; he had led a serious fight against the Protestants.[27] Finally, considerations of opportunism came to decide the question. Propaganda realized that the Syriac people could not be without a leader and feared that a non-Catholic Patriarch would take advantage of the situation to regain some of the flock. Jarwé was therefore required to make a declaration that he adhered to the Roman doctrines and was opposed to 'the Biblical Societies'. He was confirmed and received the pallium on 28 January 1828.[28]

Jarwé should have lived at the monastery of Our Lady of Deliverance at Charfeh like his uncle Ignace Michel. Instead, during his Patriarchate, he lived mostly in Aleppo and a residence in Jerusalem. This situation caused him many difficulties with the Apostolic Delegate and with his own bishops. It must be noted that living at Charfeh presented many problems of its own. It had been chosen as a place of refuge, but the neighbouring population there was not of the Syriac rite. Moreover, it was remote from most Syrian Catholic dioceses. The internal situation at the monastery of Our Lady of Deliverance posed more problems. Ignace Michel Jarwé had founded it as a patriarchal residence but also as a sort of seminary for the formation of clergy. The members of this community, however, were considered to be religious and took the three traditional vows like the Armenians of Bzommar.[29] This limited the possibilities for the Patriarch, for he had to divide his power, especially when accepting new members, with the chapter of the monastery. The monks understood this dilemma and wished to be exempted from their vow of poverty and for the monastery to be transformed into a seminary whose pupils would only be dependent on the Patriarch, who could send them to the dioceses in most need.[30]

The Propaganda Archives have some interesting statistics of the state of the Syrian Catholic Church at this time. On 8 October 1836, Jarwé wrote to the Congregation that his Patriarchate had eight bishops, seven of whom were 'converts from schism' and the eighth, Gabriel Homsy, a cradle Catholic, 'had neither ability nor good conduct'. This was the reason why he asked Propaganda to proceed with the direct election of a bishop, without going through the usual Synodal procedure.[31] The *Acta* of 1840 contain a report of the Apostolic Delegate Villardel, on each of the Syrian bishops (the *Acta* of 1852 returns to this issue), of whom five of the seven bishops were converts from the Syrian Orthodox Church who had sought union with the Catholic Church in 1827. It was reported that the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch then had pro-Catholic leanings, but the majority of his bishops opposed union. He thus waited until the majority became favourable. However, in 1827, those bishops in favour did not wish to wait any longer and became Catholics without waiting for the rest of the Church.

The Syrian Catholic dioceses were divided into two groups: one in Syria, the other in wider Mesopotamia. The *Acta* of 1852 provide statistics for each of these. In Syria, there were 100 in Beirut, none in Tripoli, one family in Emèse, 2,500 in Aleppo, 1,500 each in Nebek and Kariatim, 300 in Damascus. In Mesopotamia there were 6,000 faithful each in Mosul and Baghdad, 3,000 in both Diarbekir and Mardin, 70 families in Medyat; a total of 13,600 according to the report.[32]

The Patriarchate of Ignatius Antony Samhiri

Jarwé died in Aleppo on 17 November 1851. Two apostolic delegates then oversaw the Syrian Church – in Lebanon, Villardel, and the Pro-delegate to

Mesopotamia, Benôit Planchet. At this time Planchet had contacts with the Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church and some of his bishops. On his side, Villardel had named Gabriel Homsy patriarchal vicar. The latter indicated on 9 December 1851 to Propaganda that he had received a letter from the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch containing a profession of faith and demonstrating that he wished to become Catholic. Homsy was very reluctant, finding the profession of faith to be insufficient and fearing that it was only an effort to take over the See of the dead Patriarch.[33]

Even within the Syrian Catholic Church, the bishops were divided. There were now more converts in the Syrian Catholic Church than native born members, and the latter opposed the nomination of one of the converts from the Syrian Orthodox Church as patriarch. The Congregation decided to nominate the Bishop of Mardin, Antony Samhiri, who had converted in 1827, as patriarchal vicar, as they had always had positive reports about him. The bishops who were resident in Syria opposed this nomination, as they had opposed the plan to transfer the patriarchal see to Mesopotamia. However, Bishop Homsy died and, on 30 November 1853, the Synod met at Charfeh in the presence of Planchet. Samhiri was elected unanimously. He received the pallium on 7 April 1854. His Patriarchate would last until 16 June 1864 and be marked by the transfer of the Patriarchal See to Mardin.

The Synod of Charfeh that had elected Samhiri was extended to become a legislative council until 14 January 1854. It was the first Syrian Catholic Synod. Planchet had presided, from 19 June until 3 July 1853, over the Chaldean Council of Rabban Hormizd.[34] He brought with him the acts of this council that would greatly influence the council held at Charfeh, which would lead to the introduction of a good number of Latinizations of rite and discipline. The acts of the Synod of Charfeh were sent to Rome where they were translated into Latin and Italian. Samhiri protested against some imprecision in the translation, perhaps because he had understood that the council had not respected the Syrians' own tradition enough. Things dragged on despite the repeated insistence of the Congregation, and when Samhiri died on 16 June 1864 the text of the Council had still not been approved.[35]

The Patriarchate of Samhiri was deeply marked by various persecutions of the Syrian Christians. The Christian quarters of Aleppo were attacked and sacked by Muslims. This situation made the leader of the Syrian Catholic 'nation' undertake a long journey to Europe to obtain funds there to meet the needs of the community. This journey brought him abundant funds, some of which were immediately used to deal with the most urgent needs, and another part was deposited with European and Asian banks.[36] Propaganda knew about the sums of money accumulated by Samhiri. To avoid their loss, as soon as it heard of the Patriarch's illness, it decreed the suspension of the election of his successor and appointed the Bishop of Aleppo, Denys George Chelhot, to oversee the administration of the patriarchate.[37] On 25 July 1865 an election was allowed, but under two conditions – the formal agreement of the bishops to the transfer of the patriarchal see to Mardin, and agreement to

divide Samhiri's funds between the various dioceses. On 14 May 1868, the Synod met at Aleppo under the leadership of Chelhot, which, with some modification, returned to the decisions taken at Charfeh of 1854–1855.

The Patriarchate of Ignatius Philip Arqous and the First Vatican Council

Ignace Philippe Arqous[38] was elected Patriarch on 21 June 1868 and the Holy See approved his election on the word of the apostolic pro-delegate, Nicholas de Barcelone, despite the accusations of simony from Bishops Heliani of Damascus and Jarkhi of Baghdad. The synod deliberations were sent to the Congregation, which examined them in detail. Propaganda would have liked to add to it measures corresponding to those of the Bull *Reversurus* of the Armenians, above all about the election of bishops.[39] This intention of Propaganda made for a very tense atmosphere, and made the publication of Council decisions impossible. It contributed to feelings of suspicion about Roman authority that would last during the Vatican Council. Arqous did not take part in any of the solemn sessions of that Council, and only Bishops Benni and Jarkhi took part, with a vote in favour, at the session during which the promulgation of papal infallibility occurred.

Bishop Bahnam Benni of Mosul,[40] on the other hand, took a very active part in the Vatican Council, where he was elected a member of the Commission for Oriental Churches and the Missions. His observations on the *Schema* prepared by this Commission are interesting, especially on the question of status of an Eastern Catholic episcopate in a mainly Latin rite church, and on the problem raised by the presence of several bishops in the same area, contrary to the ancient discipline of the Church.[41] Trained at the Propaganda College between 1847 and 1856, he allowed himself to be influenced by Latin ideas, particularly in the area of discipline. On the question of papal Primacy he gave a long intervention on 9 June 1870 in favour of the Constitution *Pastor Aeternus*[42] in the opposite sense of the intervention of Melkite Patriarch Youssef on 9 May that year.[43]

Patriarch Ignatius George Chelhot 1874–1891

Arqous died in 1874; the Archbishop of Aleppo, George Chelhot succeeded him. He was distinguished by several initiatives. In the area of liturgy, he asked Bishop David to prepare the edition of the Syrian Great Breviary, which was published in Mosul in seven volumes between 1886 and 1896. He also had tried to create a religious Congregation that would 'evangelize' in Syrian Orthodox villages but the difficult circumstances in which this religious life would have to take place made its existence precarious.

The most notable act of his Patriarchate came from the Council, at a meeting that took place in Charfeh in 1888, which aimed to give the Syrian Catholic Church its own long-term legislation. The Synod (prepared over a

long period by Bishop Clément-Joseph David (1829–1890), the Syrian Arch-
bishop of Damscus and one of the great scholars on the Syriac tradition,
and then by Antony Kandelaft and Louis Rahmānī, former pupils of the
Propaganda College) was presided over by the Apostolic Delegate Louis
Piavi. The measures that were voted on were above all inspired by the other
Oriental Catholic Councils, although they made no allusion to the previous
two Syrian Synods. They were also strongly influenced by Latin canon law.[44]

Behnam Benni and the patriarchal conferences at the Vatican

Chelhout died on 8 December 1891. Rome imposed the condition that his
successor should live at Mardin on being elected, an onerous requirement.
The Archbishop of Mosul, Behnam Benni, was the most obvious candidate
but he did not want to give up his See. Finally a compromise was reached –
Benni was unanimously elected on 12 October 1893 and accepted on condi-
tion that he could keep his administration at Mosul, where he would continue
to live during the winter season.

Under his Patriarchate, the 1888 Council and the changes in dispute
between Rome and some Syrian Catholic bishops to it continued to be
an issue. The Council was finally approved on 28 March 1896 by the Congre-
gation of Propaganda, which also published its decisions. Several articles,
however, were never applied.[45]

Ignatius Behnam Benni took an active role in the patriarchal conferences
at the Holy See in 1894 (24 October–8 November). We know that the
Armenian and Chaldean Patriarchs were absent and that the Maronite
Patriarch, very elderly, was represented by his Vicar, Elie Huayek. Benni
could make his voice heard along with that of Patriarch Youssef. They had
had a confrontation at the Vatican Council over Roman primacy, and Benni
had shown himself in favour of the Latinization of Oriental discipline. How-
ever, they now found themselves united against the Latinization conducted
by the missionaries in the Near East, and demanded severe measures to
check this movement. They also agreed to underline the exaggerated and
harmful interference of the Apostolic Delegates in the affairs of the Oriental
Churches, and this complaint was supported by Huayek. He took part in the
writing of the Encyclical *Orientalium Dignitas* and himself published in 1895
a pastoral letter in Arabic to be distributed in the Syrian Catholic Church.

Patriarchate of Ignatius Ephrem Rahmānī 1898–1929

Benni died in Mosul on 13 September 1897. The Bishop of Aleppo, Rahmānī,
was elected Patriarch on 9 October 1898. He took the name of Ignace
Ephrem II Rahmānī. Rahmānī had studied at the Propaganda College. He
had already taken part in the preparation of the Charfeh Synod of 1888. This
cultural activity would carry on all through his Patriarchal life and would be
shown through many academic publications, above all in the areas of history

and liturgy. At the same time, he tried to give his Church some solid and what he hoped to be permanent institutions. He built a seminary in 1902 on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem for the Syrian Catholic clergy and gave its direction to the Benedictines. In 1901 he founded, at Mardin and Harissa, the Congregation of the Ephremite Sisters of the Mother of Mercy. This Congregation disappeared in the trials of the First World War but was refounded at Harissa in 1958. We should finally mention that it was under his Patriarchate that the transfer of the Patriarchal See from Mardin to Beirut took place.[46]

The Syrian Catholic Church in the late Ottoman period

With the help of missionaries, the Syrian Catholic Church gained adherents. The Ottoman Empire had become carved up into spheres of European influence. The French, whose interests lay in Lebanon and Syria, pressured the Sultan to recognize the Syrian Catholic Church as distinct *millet*, and this recognition came in 1830. This move placed the Syrian Orthodox Church at a strong disadvantage, since it was still dependent on the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople. With this formal recognition of the Syrian Catholic *millet*, Catholic missionary activity among the Syrian Orthodox, which had come to a halt during the massacres of 1850 and 1860, resumed. By the turn of the twentieth century many Syrian Orthodox had become Catholic; estimates place the number between 60,000 and 65,000. The expansion of the Syrian Catholic Church came to an abrupt halt in 1915 'the year of the Sword'.[47]

In the course of the nineteenth century the Syrian Catholic Church experienced a period of Latinization of its liturgy, governance, and customs, a phenomenon that had not spared the other Eastern Catholic Churches of the Near East. For example, the Roman church imposed celibacy on Syrian Catholic priests at the Synod of Charfeh (1888). A mixed clergy of married and celibate priests had been the norm in ancient Christianity and continues to be the case in the Oriental Orthodox churches, whereas the discipline of having only celibate priests to the exclusion of those who are married is a peculiarity of the Latin Church. The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) stipulated that all Eastern Catholic Churches should eliminate Latin practices and restore their native traditions, yet this process has not been completed. The first attempt to organize an indigenous Catholic missionary order began in 1882, when the Missionaries of St. Ephrem were founded in Mardin. Although the persecutions of the 1880s and 1915 vitiated the order, its activity resumed in 1935 at the convent of Charfeh, where the order also established the patriarchal seminary and printing house. The Syrian Catholic Church also administers the monastery of Mar Benham near Mosul, Iraq.

During the period of the massacres under the Ottomans, the Syrian Catholic Church possessed in the person of Patriarch Ignace Ephraem Rahmānī, one of its brightest lights. He published a number of works, particularly in the

fields of history, liturgy and translation, from the printing press he had established at Charfeh. The patriarchate of Rahmani was a generally propitious time for the Syrian Catholic Church, with a considerable increase in members, particularly from the Syrian Orthodox Church. In 1913 several Syrian Orthodox bishops converted to Catholicism. However the indiscriminate suffering of all the Syriac communities in the First World War would serve cruelly to underline the absurdity of such inter-Christian proselytism. Rahmānī also left a number of institutions as a legacy to his Church.

During his ecclesiastical leadership Rahmānī oversaw the transfer of the patriarchate to Beirut to protect the church from the Ottomans and from clashes with the Syrian Orthodox. The first residence of the Syrian Catholic patriarch was in Aleppo. Following the persecution of Christians in Ottoman Syria in 1850, the Syrian Catholic patriarchate was transferred to Mardin. After the 1915 and subsequent massacres, the patriarchate was relocated to Beirut, where many Syrian Catholics had taken refuge because Lebanon was a French protectorate. In spite of these difficulties, however, the Church authorities were not deterred from launching a new wave of proselytism, encouraged as they were by Pope Benedict XV and protected by the French Mandate in the Levant. Many Orthodox from the Syrian community in Iraq converted to Catholicism.

The period of the French Mandate was, for the Syrian Catholics, a period of socio-cultural advancement and ecclesial renewal.

From the Middle East to India: the Malankar Syrian Catholic Church

Today, Syriac Christianity has found an important home in India where they now number many millions and experience continuing and significant growth. The Syriac tradition articulates for many an indigenous authenticity for contemporary Indian Christianity The two Malankara Churches (Orthodox and Catholic) are exclusive to India, mostly in the province of Kerala (where the Christians 'of the mountain' are known as Malenkars, as opposed to the Christians 'of the coast' who are known as Malabars). They have therefore developed in an environment that is neither Arab nor Islamic, and their faithful come exclusively from the Indian population (mostly Malayalam speakers). They have an Oriental rite, and are most precisely linked to the Syrian liturgical tradition; in the case of the Malenkar Orthodox Church, this ritual affiliation has even taken on the character of organic dependence. These links, which only history can explain, invite us to briefly examine the situation of these two Churches, which in some way make up a sort of offshoot of Oriental Christianity, and particularly the Syriac tradition, outside of their original area.

The history of the Malenkar Orthodox Church is a late episode in the history of Christianity in India. The evangelization of the Malabar coast and in particular the province of Kerala, which tradition attributes to St Thomas,

is in fact the work of the Church of the East, blocked in its expansion to the west by the barrier of Islam but whose missionary zeal could be employed to the east, as far as Indonesia and China. The development of Oriental Christianity in Asia was as prodigious as it was brief: starting in the seventh century it gained millions of faithful. But the Mongol conversion to Islam in the thirteenth century and the turmoil that overtook their empire from the fourteenth century rapidly led to its collapse. Only the communities in India, sheltered from the unrest in central Asia because of being on the periphery, could continue.

In the sixteenth century, the Portuguese arrived in India and discovered these curious forgotten Christians and for them 'schismatic' communities there on the Malabar coast, which they immediately sought to Latinize. The local Church, after the Synod of Diamper in 1599, had to abandon the faith and doctrine of the Church of the East and the essence of its Oriental rite (to which it would partially return later); from this encounter came the Malabar Catholic Church that we know today. As could have been foreseen, however, the Indian clergy and community abandoned the traditional liturgy with reluctance. The revolt grew increasingly strong towards the middle of the seventeenth century, while Portuguese power was in decline in the country. The revolt leader was Archdeacon Thomas Parambil, an ambitious man who hoped to become the leader of the Church. The break with Rome, in 1653, assumed however that the dissidents would find a structure to take them in and protect them from a possible counter-offensive.

Logic required them to return to the Church from which they came, that of the Church of the East. But it was then in decline and confined to the residual small mountain communities of Hakkari (eastern Anatolia), totally cut off from India. The advances of Thomas Parambil therefore remained unanswered. The Syriac Church, however, showed up at the right time. A Syrian Orthodox bishop, Mar Gregorios, arrived on the Malabar coast in 1665. He had no difficulty in rallying the Malabar communities lapsing from their Church, whose rite and ecclesial organization were close to the Church of the East tradition and who stood firm in their anti-Roman position. He agreed to consecrate Thomas Parambil as the first Syrian Orthodox bishop of the country. Oriental Christianity in India was divided from then on into two branches, one Catholic (and very Latinised), the 'Malabar', and the other joined to the Syrian Church (Syro–Antiochene rite), called 'Malenkar'. By a strange historical paradox, the dissidents, to preserve their religious identity, placed themselves under the authority of the Church whose Christological doctrine was the opposite of their original faith.

The existence of the Malenkar Orthodox Church would from then on be a long struggle for survival (against Protestant and Catholic proselytism), but also to escape the leadership of the Syrian Church, rapidly perceived as too heavy. A first reaction, in the middle of the eighteenth century, would lead to a small autonomous Church of Anjur-Thozhiur, which still exists but only has a few thousand faithful. Protestant and Anglican proselytism, which

started in the nineteenth century thanks to British colonialism, ended up in 1889 with the creation of a powerful Protestant Syrian Rite Church called the 'Reformed Syrian Church of Mar Thomas' (since weakened thanks to schism, it still has more than a million members). The Catholic movement left the Malenkar Church alone for a long time thanks to the presence of the Malabar Catholic Church, the natural refuge for Oriental Christians in India who wished to follow Roman obedience. The Malenkar Catholic Church in fact ended up being created in 1930, following a schism in the Orthodox Church of the same rite.

Among the Malenkars as elsewhere, the movement for union with the Catholic Church was not a natural tendency: it was strongly sought by Roman initiatives. During the eighteenth century, several attempts at reunification took place, all without a durable result. Finally in the twentieth century, when Rome had essentially abandoned its traditional policy of proselytism, it had a sort of posthumous success with the Malenkars. But this time the initiative came from the local Church itself.

In 1926 a Malenkar Orthodox bishop, Mar Ivanios of Bethany, was mandated by his Church's synod to open negotiations with Rome with a view to reunification. In counterpart to their return, the Malenkars demanded to be able to keep their liturgy (Syro-Antiochene but in the Malayalam language) and their church hierarchy. Rome, on its side, required that proof be shown of the validity of baptisms and ordinations. The discussions went nowhere, but the negotiator, Mar Ivanios, his suffragan bishop Mar Theophilus of Tiruvalla, most of the religious order of the Imitation of Christ and a handful of clerics and faithful decided to rejoin Catholicism. Once more in the history of Oriental Christendom, an attempt at reunification finally ended with the creation of another Church.

Although the circumstances of its creation were very contingent, the Malenkar Catholic Church rapidly showed a pastoral dynamism that *a posteriori* justified its continued existence. The rapid rate of increase was apparent in the number of conversions: in 1932 5,150; in 1950 65,000; in 1955 85,000; in 1957, 100,000 and in 1962, 124,000, and in 1970, 183,490. In 70 years, it gathered some 500,000 faithful (who did not all come from its Orthodox sister Church) in the traditional Christian homeland of Kerala, and particularly in Trivandrum. It has a missionary order founded by Mar Ivanois while he still belonged to the Malenkar Orthodox Church, the order of the Imitation of Christ. A major seminary opened in 1983 in Trivandrum as well as a 'Malenkar Academy', which brings together theologians and lay people. A clergy meeting is held there annually. Generally it is felt that, of all the Oriental Christian Churches in India, the Malenkar Catholic Church has seen the fastest growth, has the most fervent community and shows the most dynamic pastoral action. This vitality depends on a local situation incomparably more favourable than the Arab world: there are no juridical or social obstacles to evangelization, there are many priestly vocations. The fact that the Malenkar Orthodox Church has suffered a serious internal

crisis over the last 40 years has undoubtedly favoured the growth of Catholicism.

Rich in potential, however up until recently the Malenkar Catholic Church was still embryonic, but in 2005 John Paul II raised the church to the status of a major archiepiscopal Church, conferring on its present head, Archbishop Cyril Baseleus, the title of Catholicos. According to west Syriac ecclesial tradition this is equivalent to a major archbishop or patriarch. However, often its development is restricted by the fact that, outside Kerala, the Syro-Malenkar émigrés depend on Latin hierarchies. Apart from the return to Rome of the Orthodox Malenkars, its vocation is to bring Christianity and Hinduism together, particularly in terms of spirituality; this is the role, among others, that, Kurisumala Ashram has taken on, founded by the monastic community of the Syro-Malenkar rite, the Imitation of Christ, under the Cistercian rule.[48] In February 1986, during his journey to India, the Pope went to Trivandrum – this privileged moment was a real consecration for the young Malenkar Catholic Church.

Common to both the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, the Malenkar rite came from the Syriac rite but has been enriched by local practices that give it an even more complex symbolism. In the churches, there are neither benches nor iconostases, but the sanctuary is isolated from the nave by a low wall, pierced by a door with a curtain. The Mass, celebrated in Malayalam (with some formulae that have stayed in Syriac), has the same structure as in the wider Catholic Church. The Malenkar Catholic Church undertook a general revision of its liturgical texts in 1984.

The Syrian Catholic Church into the twentieth century and beyond

Gabriel Tappouni, who became patriarch on Rahmānī's death in 1929, had accepted the cardinal's hat in 1935, thereby, according to many at the time, at least implicitly recognizing this Roman office as superior to his position as Syrian Catholic Patriarch. With strong personal ties to France, to which he owed his elevation to the purple of a cardinal, Gabriel Tappouni would continue to pursue, until his death in 1968, the ideal of an Eastern Christianity drawing from the wellsprings of both Western and Arab cultures. Tappouni encouraged a union with Rome movement among the Syrian Orthodox living in the Sudan, who together with their bishop Mār Hannā Ghandūr (who died in 1961) joined the Syrian Catholic Church. He built the new patriarchal see at Beirut and set up patriarchal vicariates; that of Upper Jazīra was made an eparchy (al-Hasaka) in 1957. Other vicariates existed in Jordan, in Egypt and at Mardin. A seasoned Vatican hand, he had the ear of the Curia and was adept at handling the rivalries between Roman institutions. During the Second Vatican Council, he was the only Eastern Church dignitary with a seat on the Presidential Council. Thanks to his efforts, his Church enjoyed an influence out of all proportion to its small membership.

Ignace Antoine II Hayek succeeded Gabriel Tappouni in 1968. Born in Aleppo, he undertook lengthy studies in Rome, with a degree in Canon Law. Returning as a parish priest his involvement with charitable organizations brought him into close contact with the impoverished workers and refugees of Aleppo's *bidonvilles*. He was elected Archbishop of Aleppo in 1959, and took part in all the sessions of the Second Vatican Council before succeeding to the Patriarchate in 1968. He published numerous works, including histories of the monasteries and monastic movement in the Syrian Catholic tradition. In addition to revising all the liturgical books used in the Syrian Catholic Rite, he was the moving force behind the construction of a new cathedral in Aleppo and, despite the Lebanese civil war, both the Cathedral of the Annunciation and the Church of Saint Behnam in Beirut. During Hayek's Patriarchate, the Monastery of Our Lady of Deliverance at Charfeh underwent major restoration, without losing any of its traditional character. He also had the foresight to establish Syrian Catholic missions in the USA, Canada, Australia, Venezuela and Sweden, as well as renewing the mission in Paris and restoring the Procurature in Rome. The Procurators have the Eastern Patriarchs to the Holy See is an important role as they act of the patriarchal representative to the powerful dicasteries of the Roman curia. Having served his Church for 30 years, he resigned in 1998 at the age of 88, and was succeeded by Ignace Moussa I Daoud.

During Daoud's visit to Rome shortly afterwards, the pope chose to renew an old tradition. Rather than presenting a pallium to the newly appointed patriarch, John Paul II said that in order to 'recognize the dignity of the Patriarchal duty', there would be a eucharistic concelebration, on the basis that 'the Eucharist is by nature the symbol which best expresses full communion, of which it is, at the same time, the inexhaustible source'. The pope went on to say that 'this gesture, which will remain engraved in the memory of the faithful, will be repeated' whenever a new Eastern Patriarch visits the Vatican.[49] Daoud was appointed Prefect for the Congregation for Oriental Churches[50] in 2000, and resigned from the Patriarchate the following year, being granted in the same year the title of Patriarch *ad personam*, and created Cardinal-Bishop.

The next Patriarch of Antioch and all the East of the Syrians was Ignace Pierre VIII Abdel-Ahad. Born in 1930 at Aleppo, he was forced, like his predecessor, to leave Jerusalem and continue his studies at Charfeh as a consequence of the Arab–Israeli conflict. In 1996, he was elected Bishop of Jerusalem and the Holy Land by the Holy Synod of Syrian Catholic bishops, and was elected patriarch by the Synod meeting at Charfeh in mid-February 2001, formally sealing communion between himself and Pope John Paul II by concelebrating a liturgy at the Vatican on 8 June of the same year. Pierre VIII resigned in February 2008 after an extraordinary synod. The affairs of the Syrian Catholic Church had been governed by an episcopal committee of three archbishops[51]

The Syrian Catholic bishops gathered in Rome a year later and on

23 January elected their colleague Ephrem Joseph F. Younan as the new Patriarch. For the last two decades he had been charged with caring for this growing Eastern Catholic community in north America. The patriarchal election of Ignatius Youssif III Younan was a significant moment in the life of this important expression of Eastern Catholicism in an increasingly complex and diverse global Catholic Church. All previous patriarchs have taken the name 'Ignatius' to symbolize their connection with the second-century martyr bishop Ignatius of Antioch whose ideas have been so important in giving character to the exercise of authority in the Christian Church. Ignatius Youssif III joins four other patriarchs who claim Antioch (today in modern Turkey) as their see: Greek Orthodox, Melkite Catholic, Maronite Catholic, and Syrian Orthodox – the Latin Patriarchate founded during the Crusade period was abolished in 1964. To his responsibilities since 1929 should be added the French Equestrian Order of St. George, whose members, Catholic and Orthodox, are under the protection of the Syrian Catholic Patriarch of Antioch.

Antioch, which played such a central role as link between the Greek or Byzantine, the Syriac and the Mesopotamian traditions, now plays a similar role as link with the Arab and Islamic world and culture. The Antiochene church is often referred to as the 'Church of the Arabs', although the patriarchates themselves, two of which are based in Beirut and three in Damascus, receive this nomenclature differently – it does bear the reality of an important religious interface. The rich pluralism of traditions in the ancient jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Antioch, that is to say mainly the present states of Lebanon and Syria, have suffered many divisions in the course of history. During the last decades a growing awareness of the absurdity of this situation has induced new efforts to re-establish communion among the different traditions. Both Rome and Constantinople have responded to these significant developments by posing the question to Antioch whether re-establishing ecclesial communion on the local level is conceivable without a renewed communion on the universal level.

Increasingly concerned about the diminishing presence of Christians in the lands of the Church's beginnings, Benedict XVI urged the patriarch and Syriac Catholics to be beacons of peace in the Middle East, 'where the Syrian Church has an appreciated historical presence. My desire is that in the East, from where the proclamation of the Gospel came, the Christian communities continue living and giving testimony of their faith, as they have done throughout the centuries.'

Today the Syrian Catholics are small in number: some 160,000, added to the 350,000 Orthodox, are what remains of this great Christian church and culture that at one time stretched into Asia. Between the mass conversion to Islam in the wake of persecutions or the massacres of the early twentieth-century Ottoman period, which might have numbered well over a hundred thousand, the Syrian Church took refuge, not without grandeur, in its worship, liturgy and sacred Syriac literature. However small is not without

significance: acknowledging the greatness of the Syriac tradition, in 1920 Benedict XV proclaimed St Ephraem the Syrian a 'Doctor of the Universal Church'.

In terms of history and theological culture both the Greek East and the Latin West seem to represent what is essentially a European cultural face of Christianity. This was encapsulated by the notion repeated by John Paul II that 'it will be necessary [for the Church] to learn again to breathe fully with two lungs, the Western and the Eastern', a metaphor that can be traced back to the great Dominican ecumenist Yves Congar. In a long forgotten text, Bede Griffith, who practised the Syrian Catholic Rite, saw it as having a prophetic status for evangelization in India and hailed Syriac Christian presence at the Second Vatican Council as a marker that the Church was truly global and that Asia had found its natural partner in rite and theological culture. Today Syriac Christianity is thriving in modern India.

Besides the non-European geographical roots of the different Churches that make up the Syriac Orient, there is another important feature that is worth recalling. Several of these churches have existed throughout their history as minority religious communities living under regimes that were often hostile. This has not made life easy for them at times. The original cradle of Syrian Catholics was Turkey, particularly the province of Tor Abdin (the Syrian Catholic Patriarchate was at Mardin for most of the nineteenth century). Today this is no more than a memory, and the 2,500 Syrian Catholics who have remained in Turkey are mostly in Istanbul. The main Syrian Catholic homeland today is Iraq (around 65,000). After the massacres of the First World War, numerous Syrians from Turkey found refuge in the north of what is now Iraq, above all in Mosul. Many of these émigrés, cut off from their traditional ecclesial structures, then became Catholics; from this, there are today more Syrian Catholics than Syrian Orthodox in Iraq. Syriac Christians still experience a weakness in political power, with many of their number being killed since 2003. The Syrian Catholic Archbishop of Mosul, Casmoussa was kidnapped and then realised after pressure from the Vatican and other Middle Eastern states in 2006. The other home of the Syrian Catholic Church is Syria-Lebanon with 80,000. These are mostly descended from émigrés from Turkey, who moved following the First World War, but joined a more ancient population in Syria. There had been a Syrian Catholic community at Aleppo that went back to the constitution of the Church in the seventeenth century; numerous Syrian Catholics moved to Lebanon in the eighteenth century to flee the Ottoman persecutions, and then moved their Patriarchate to Charfeh in mount Lebanon. Elsewhere, the Syrian Catholics are very few, about 2,000 in Egypt and 1,500 in the whole of Israel–Jordan. However, today large numbers live in the diaspora, at a guess, some 50,000 in America and Europe, where many disappear into Latin rite parishes.

Ecumenical dialogue, which has been remarkably successful between the Catholic Church and the Syrian Orthodox churches, gives new meaning to the continuing division between Syriac Catholics and Orthodox. In 1971 the

Syrian Orthodox Patriarch Ignatius Yàqub II visited Paul VI in Rome, the first such meeting between the two heads of Churches since their division over the Council of Chalcedon (451). In 1984 John Paul II and the new Syrian Orthodox Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I was signed a 'Common Declaration of Faith', which stated, 'we find today no real basis for the sad divisions and schisms that subsequently arose between us concerning the doctrine of the Incarnation. In words and life we confess the true doctrine concerning Christ our Lord, notwithstanding the differences in interpretation of such a doctrine which arose at the time of the council of Chalcedon'. Over two decades old, these words re-order 16 centuries of division.

War and inter-religious conflict in the Middle East have always been of concern to the Vatican. The Eastern Catholic bishops of Iraq have called for a Synod for the Church in the Middle East similar to those in America, Africa, Asia and Europe. The presence of the Syrian Catholic Church, whilst small in numbers in the global Church, has meant that the Syriac Christian Orient cannot be regarded as just a curiosity, or as an optional extra on the fringe of the Greek and Latin West, should rather be understood as an integral part of its ecclesiology. At the borderland between religion and culture, the Greek East and the Latin West, between the Christian world and the Islamic (and Hindu) worlds, maybe, with some imagination, the Syrian Catholic Church might be more then a historical fact but a contemporary sign.

Notes

1 Peter, Paul and James of Jerusalem

1 Binns, 2002, p. vii.
2 Dignas and Winter, 2007, p. 36.
3 See Brock, 1996a, pp. 23–35.
4 Parry, Ken and Melling, 1999, 'Ecumenical Councils' in Parry et al, 1999, pp. 171–172.
5 Abouzayd, 1999, pp. 305–308.
6 Coakley, 1999, 'Chaldean Church', in Parry et al, 1999, p. 116.
7 Coakley and Healey, 1999, 'Syrian Catholic Church', in Parry et al, 1999, pp. 466–467.
8 David J. Melling, 1999, 'Melkite Catholics', in Parry et al, 1999, pp. 312–313.
9 One has only to see how the *James Bond* franchise and other thrillers, both literary and on the cinema screen, have replaced the Soviet villains of the second half of the twentieth century with bearded pseudo-Osama Bin Laden figures as the embodiment of evil in popular western culture.

2 The Syrian Orthodox Church in the modern Middle East

1 Overviews are provided by two Patriarchs, Yacoub III, 1974 and Zakka I, 2008. A sympathetic account of the Church today is given by Chaillot, 1998, and much further information can be found in Brock and Taylor, 2001, vol. III. For the wider political context see O'Mahony, 2006b, and for the historical background of the 18th and 19th centuries, see Joseph (1983). An informative internet site is http://suryoyo.uni-goettingen.de/sok/.
2 At present there are two Patriarchs, one following the Old Calendar ('Ancient Church of the East'), and the other the New ('Assyrian Church of the East').
3 See Brock, 2004a. The basic features of the different positions on christology, and the main developments in recent dialogue, are set out in Brock and Taylor, 2001: III, 26–33.
4 A table illustrating the place of the Syriac Churches amongst the other Churches can be found in Brock and Taylor, 2001: III, 25; likewise in Brock, 2008: 18.
5 Sélis, 1988; O'Mahony, 2006b; Flannery, 2008.
6 Brock, 1996.
7 Brock, 1992: 264–268.
8 Gutas, 1998 who, however, plays down the essential role of Syriac scholars in the early stages; a useful collection of studies on that aspect can be found in CERO 2005.
9 For some prominent twentieth-century writers see Kiraz, 2008, and in general, Brock, 1989 and Brock and Taylor, 2001: III, chapter 6.
10 See especially Balicka-Witakowska, 2001, and, in more detail, Leroy, 1964.

11 Jacob and Calonghi, 2002: 322.

12 For these two factors, see Brock, 2008.

13 It has only been possible in recent years to publish a number of accounts in Syriac. For two recent works in English, see de Courtois, 2004 and Gaunt, 2006; a narrative account for one particular small town is given by Abdalla, 2008.

14 Today they are said to number c. 130,000 worldwide: O'Mahony, 2006b: 50.

15 His own account is given in Samuel, 1968; see also Kiraz, 2005.

16 A useful outline is provided by Çiçek, 2006, esp. 21.

17 Rassam, 2005; O'Mahony, 2008: 136.

18 The main rivals are the Syriac term Suryoyo, Syriac (as an ethnic, as well as linguistic term), Aramaean, and Assyrian; the last originated in the Church of the East, where it is widespread, based on the claim (made also by western missionaries in the aftermath of Layard's dramatic excavations in the 19th century) that the indigenous Christians of northern Iraq were descendents of the ancient Assyrians. The extent of the divisive character of this issue is indicated by the creation in Sweden of a second separate Patriarchal Vicariate (1994).

19 A schism that had been simmering much of the twentieth century was briefly healed in 1958, but since 1975 has been in effect again; as a result there are currently two bodies, the Syrian Orthodox under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Antioch, and the independent Orthodox Syrian Church, each with its own Catholicos. In size they are approximately equal. A brief outline of the complicated situation concerning the Churches of Syriac liturgical tradition in India can be found in Brock and Taylor, 2001: III, 13–15.

20 A splendidly illustrated introduction to the Syrian Orthodox presence in Tur ʿAbdin is provided by Hollerweger, 1999; a detailed study can be found in Anschütz, 1984.

21 For the ecumenical role of Syriac monasteries in the transmission of monastic texts see Brock, 2004b.

22 Illustrations can be found in Brock and Taylor, 2001: III, 83–85.

23 Bell, 1911, fig. 196; the last known nun was Sister Zaro, martyred in 1915.

24 An account of the resumption of women's monastic life in the 1960s is given by Gülcan, 1977.

25 Reliable population numbers are hard to ascertain: Betts, 1979 is a good guide for approximately the mid-20th century, but since then further emigration on a large scale has taken place. A recent estimate (Mengozzi, 2008: 164) gives the following figures: Syrian Orthodox: Lebanon, 14,700; Syria, 89,400; Iraq, 37,200; Jordan 2,200; Palestine, 2,500; Turkey 10,700–20,700 [sic] and Syrian Catholic: Egypt, 1,300; Lebanon 19,700; Syria, 22,400; Iraq, 55,500; Palestine, 500; Turkey 1,500. For villages in Tur ʿAbdin over the period 1915–1997, see the tables in Brock and Taylor, 2001: III, 92–94.

26 For the main locations, see Brock and Taylor, 2001: III, 99–103. For Germany, see especially Merten, 1997.

27 An interesting account of the teaching of Syriac in Syria and Lebanon is given in Nouro, 1967; in Syria all private (and thus also Church) schools were nationalized that same year (1967).

28 To be distinguished from the French series of Colloquia on the Syriac tradition published under the general heading 'Patrimoine syriaque' by the *Centre d'Études et de Recherches Orientales* (Antélias), which is run by the Maronite order of Antonines.

29 Barsoum, 2003.

30 Likewise for a period in Iran, but this did not involve the Syrian Orthodox.

31 Abdmeshiho, 2002; Henno, 2005.

32 A notable example is the famous romantic novel, *Paul et Virginie* by Bernardin de Saint Pierre, translated by Paulos Gabriel (1912–1971) and Ghattas Maqdasi Elyas (1911–2008); this was published in Beirut in 1955.

33 Ishaq, 1990. Notable among recent authors using Turoyo as a literary vehicle is Jan Bet-Ṣawoce.

3 The Maronites in Lebanon

1 Decreasing birth rates and continual emigration are cited as reasons for the decline of the Maronite community. See Valognes (1994). On the 1932 census, see Picard (1996), p. 66.
2 Under Islamic rule, Christians were categorised as '*dhimmi*' (covenanted people). In return for freedom of person, property and religion, they paid an annual poll tax called the *jizya*. This system has generally been perceived as highlighting the differences between Muslims and other groups and leading to a two-tier system. The Maronites are possibly the only Christian community that escaped this second-class citizenship. This was partly due to the lack of direct rule over Mount Lebanon, and its relative lack of importance in the vast Islamic empire. The reawakening of ties between the Maronites and Rome in the aftermath of the Crusades also allowed the community to maintain its autonomy for many centuries. For information on the dhimmi system, see Muhibbu-din (2000).
3 Faris (1992), p. 15.
4 Labaki (1993), p. 6.
5 In the mid sixth century, Emperor Justinian promoted a compromise theological doctrine in an attempt to regain the unity of the early church. Monotheletism proposed that Christ had a dual nature but single will. This doctrine was condemned by the Chalcedonian church in 681. See Valognes (1994), pp. 370–371.
6 Abouzayd (1999), p. 305.
7 Faris (1992), p. 50.
8 Salibi (1990), p. 425.
9 Valognes (1994), p. 373.
10 Labaki (1993), p. 30.
11 In order to gain legitimacy, the patriarch must receive ecclesiastical communion from the Pope. The Vatican must also be informed immediately of a vacant patriarchal see and subsequent elections. Although canon law may suggest that the patriarch is elected solely by the Synod of Bishops, it is evident that the Vatican exercises strong influence on this issue. See the *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches Latin English Edition* (1990).
12 The Vatican II document *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* (1965) addresses Eastern Catholic Churches, stating that the entire Church benefits from the preservation of the spiritual heritage of these branches. See Marini (1994), pp. 137–169.
13 *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches* p. 17.
14 Nisan (1991), p. 171. For information on the Maronite liturgy, see the official website of the Maronite Patriarchate at www.bkerke.org.lb.
15 The issue of patriarchal territory raised fierce debate during the codification process of the *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium (CCEO)*. The final format retained the traditional geographic interpretation of territory. This meant that the Congregation for the Eastern Churches (part of the Roman Curia) remained responsible for the pastoral care of Maronite communities outside of the Middle East. While Maronite dioceses have been established, these bishops are under the direct authority of the Vatican rather than the head of the Maronite Church. Under the CCEO, the Church hierarchy has more impact as the Synod of Bishops presents a shortlist of candidates for vacant eparchies abroad. For an interesting discussion on the formation of the Maronite Church in the United States, see Labaki (1993).
16 Maila (1998), p. 34.
17 Moosa (1986), p. 281.

18 Phares (1995), p. 48.
19 Hanf (1993), pp. 54–55.
20 van Leeuwen (1990), pp. 7–8.
21 Abraham (1977), p. 91.
22 Salibi (1965), p. 63. On the Reglement Organique, see the detailed description given in Khalaf (2002), pp. 277–282.
23 Akarli (1993), p. 164.
24 Frankel (1976), p. 218.
25 Khalaf (2002), p. 97.
26 Hanf (1993), p. 60.
27 Akarli (1993), p. 164; Makdisi (2000), p. 103.
28 Moosa (1986), p. 269.
29 Akarli (1993), p. 171.
30 Moosa (1986), p. 287.
31 Hanf (1993), pp. 64–65.
32 Picard (1998), p. 205.
33 el-Khazen (1991), p. 9.
34 Cragg (1992), p. 206.
35 The system maintained the tradition of appointing a Maronite President, a Sunni Prime Minister and a Shiite Parliamentary Speaker. Parliamentary representation was set at a ration of 6:5 in favour of the Christian communities. See Phares (1995), pp. 87–89.
36 Picard (1998), p. 207.
37 For further details on the 1958 crisis, see Hanf (1993), p. 116.
38 Frankel, (1976), p. 258.
39 Khalaf (1968), p. 254.
40 Hanf (1993), p. 130.
41 Saliba (1988), p. 151.
42 Boutros Labaki (1998), p. 246.
43 Schulze (1999), p. 67.
44 Phares (1995), p. 151.
45 Hanf (1993), p. 192.
46 Moosa (1986), p. 301.
47 Khalidi (1979), p. 70.
48 For information on the Taif Accord and its impact on the Lebanese political system, see Salem, (1998), pp. 13–26.
49 Ofeish (1999), pp. 104–107.
50 Phares (1995), p. 210.
51 Picard (1998), p. 139.
52 Winslow (1996), p. 278.
53 Relations between ordinary Maronites and the Vatican had soured during the course of the civil war. The Vatican was conscious that events in Lebanon would affect all Christian communities in the region and encouraged reconciliation missions. To many Maronites, the Vatican aim of interfaith dialogue had been prioritised over the protection of their community. The decision of the Pope to meet with Yasser Arafat only one day after the assassination of Bashir Gemayel was seen as a vivid illustration that Vatican policy was out-of-touch with reality in Lebanon. See Irani (1986), pp. 98–150.
54 Laurent (2002), pp. 315–316.
55 Najm (1998).
56 See John Paul II (1997).
57 For a detailed history of the events leading to the Maronite Synod, see Khairallah (2003), pp. 51–58. For information on the Maronite Synod, consult the official website, www.maronitesynod.org.

58 *Final Communiqué of the First Session of the Patriarchal Synod* 21 June 2003, www.maronitesynod.org/English/session1/final-communique.htm.
59 Boutros Labaki (1998), p. 253.
60 el-Khazen (2003), p. 61.
61 For detailed information of Maronite concerns at the post-war Lebanese political system, see el-Khazen (2001), pp. 43–50.
62 Communiqué September 2000, http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Parliament/2587/declaration.html.
63 UNSCR1559 was cosponsored by the United States and France in reaction to the constitutional amendment enforced by Syria.
64 *Daily Star*, 'FPM victory scores leadership positions of 21-seat parliamentary bloc', 14 June 2005.
65 *Daily Star*, 'Maronite Bishops Council', 2 June 2005.
66 In an emergency meeting, the bishops stated that the Taif Accord was still not being fully implemented and warned that Christians would feel that little had changed. See *Daily Star*, 'The Maronite Statement in Full', 12 May 2005. In 2005, several predominantly Christian residential areas were targeted as well as individual opposition activists including the deaths of Samir Kassir (journalist), George Hawi (former leader of the Lebanese Communist party) and Gibran Tueni (journalist and parliamentary deputy). The perpetrators are yet to be identified.
67 According to BBC figures, 1,000 Lebanese (mostly civilians), 116 Israeli soldiers and 43 civilians were killed, 700–900,000 Lebanese and 500,000 Israeli displaced and the cost of damage estimated at $2.5bn (Lebanon) and $1.1bn (Israel). *BBC News*, 31 August 2006: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world/middle_east/5257128.stm.
68 Hraik (2005), p. 180.
69 *Daily Star*, 'Religious leaders gather to offer support for resistance', 2 August 2006.
70 *Daily Star*, 'Sfeir "blames Hizb'allah" for state of affairs in Lebanon', 15 September 2006.

4 'The Church across the border'

 1 My warmest thanks go to Dr Suha Rassam, who read an early draft of this chapter and whose detailed comments improved it immensely. Professor Herman Teule (Nijmegen) generously agreed to read some of the sections describing the most recent situation and helped me to avoid some mistakes. Remaining errors are my own, along with all opinions expressed.

5 The Coptic Orthodox Church in modern Egypt

 1 Balta (1997).
 2 For a contemporary account of Coptic Christianity today, see Watson (2000); and the papers in the collection edited by van Doorn-Harder and Vogt (1997); O'Mahony (2004a); O'Mahony (2006a).
 3 van Doorn-Harder (2005).
 4 McCallum (2008).
 5 Behrens-Abouseif (1972).
 6 *Al-Ahram*, 21 April 1994. See also Abdelrahman (2007).
 7 Sevenaer (1997).
 8 Sadera (1999); Zeidan (1999); Henderson (2005).
 9 Cragg (1991), pp. 196–197.
10 Smith (2005).
11 Martin (1996).

12 McCallum (2005); Watson (2004a).

13 Sidarous (1980).

14 Bourguet (1991).

15 Zanetti (1996).

16 The term 'monophysite' is no longer used to describe the doctrinal position of the Oriental Churches, see Winkler (1997).

17 Suermann (2006).

18 *Dhimma* can indicate protection, obligation or responsibility. In this context it signifies the 'pact of protection' extended to non-Muslims who willingly submitted to Islamic authority and paid certain taxes, notably the *Jizyah* (or poll-tax), and the *Kharadj*, a land tax. For the status of non-Muslims in Dar el-Islam see Noth (1978; 1987).

19 Papaconstantinou (2007); Zaborowski (2008).

20 M. Martin (1997a; 1987).

21 M. Martin (1982).

22 M. Martin (1982), p. 202.

23 Sicard (1982).

24 Vansleb (1678), p. 311.

25 Sicard (1982), vol. 1, pp. 24 and 40.

26 Sauneron, (1969), p. 141.

27 Muyser (1944).

28 Vansleb (1677), pp. 26–27; Sicard (1982), vol. II, p. 72.

29 Martin (1982), p. 211.

30 Martin (1982), pp. 211–212.

31 Pennington (1982).

32 *al-Ahram*, 8 November, 1990. M. Martin (1997b) has suggested that the size of Coptic community has declined: 'most recent studies seem to establish beyond doubt a diminution of the proportion of the Copts, from about 7 per cent in the 1960s, when the renewned Kyrillos VI became Pope, to about 6 per cent today' (p. 15). According to Martin the censuses of the population were 6.7 per cent in 1966 and 5.8 per cent in 1986. Thus the absolute number of Copts would be about 3,600,000 which would make the population under four million. However this figure would be widely disputed by the Coptic Church.

33 Pennington (1982), p. 159.

34 Chaillot (1992); de Gruchy (1997).

35 Hasemann (2002).

36 McIntyre (1985). Studies concerning the modern period are interesting to compare with Frend (1982).

37 Mayeur-Jaouen (1998).

38 Finnestad (1994; 1996).

39 Reid (1995).

40 Rubenson (1997), p. 35.

41 M. Martin (1972–1973).

42 According to Rubenson a great number of texts, relating to the early monastic movement in Egypt, either unknown or fragmentary in Coptic, are preserved in Arabic translations. Given the importance of the monastic tradition for the Coptic Church, and the comparatively rapid transmission from Coptic to Arabic among the Christians in Egypt in the ninth and tenth centuries, this is only to be expected. The Arabic texts and collections are not, however, of importance only as witnesses to lost Coptic originals. On the one hand they give us material for an analysis of the characteristic elements of the type of so called Middle Arabic used in the Coptic communities. On the other hand the fact that these texts are generally preserved in collections helps us to understand how the monastic tradition grew and how it was transmitted. It is also of interest to note that the theological legacy

of the early monastic movement was preserved very much in a context of traditional wisdom literature: Rubenson (1990–1991).

43   On the female monastic movement see van Doorn-Harder (1995; 2000a; 2000b); van Doorn-Harder and Vogt (1997).

44   Meinardus (2006), pp. 44–49.

45   Meinardus (1986–1987).

46   For the early history of the Coptic monastic revival see Farag (1964).

47   One observer has stated in 2001 that 450, 000 (some 12 per cent) Coptic Christians now live abroad: Masson (2001), p. 321.

48   Masson (2005a).

49   Watkin (1963), p. 118.

50   Voile (2002).

51   For a complete biography of Cyril VI see Nasr (1996).

52   Watson (2006).

53   Egypt was a traditional route for Ethiopian pilgrims to Jerusalem. Over the centuries Ethiopian 'monastic' communities took root in the Egyptian desert, Abûnâ Abd el-Mesih al-Habashi was in a long line of African presence. O'Mahony (2006–2007; 1999).

54   Doubtless this cave was that of the former hermit Sarabamon, who had died in 1933, but most witnesses put Mina el Baramoussi's departure for the desert in 1932. *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 21, (1971), p. 179; *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 9, (1959), p. 161. See also Tyvaert (2003).

55   Meinardus (1999), pp. 93–95.

56   In 1952 Matta el-Meskeen's major work *Hayat al-Salat al-Urthudhusksiya* (Orthodox Prayer Life) was printed in its first edition. It was later augmented and reprinted in several editions, however it only translated into English as *Orthodox Prayer Life: the interior way*, Crestwood, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press in 2003. The same press published his *Love in Communion* in 1984.

57   Matta el-Meskeen early on in his career could at times demonstrate a distinctively hostile attitude to other Christians. In 1963 he and his disciples exerted significant pressure on the Coptic patriarchate to cancel the proposed meeting of the Executive Committee of the WWC in Cairo (it was subsequently moved to Geneva). They opposed the Coptic Church's participation in the WCC and accused it in three pamphlets of 'weakening the patriotism of Christians and exhibiting an altogether too friendly attitude towards the Jews' (September 1962, October 1962, January 1963): see Meinardus (1965), pp. 86–87. It should be noted that relations between the Coptic Church and the State of Israel have been complicated over the question of Dair as-Sultan in Jerusalem. See Meinardus (1995), Watson (2003).

58   The decision was only made known on 3 July. *Proche-Orient Chrétien*. 6 (1956), p. 260.

59   My account here is greatly indebted to Tyvaert (2003).

60   *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 6 (1956), p. 263.

61   Probably renewed c. 1970, it appears to have once again declined in the 1990s. The members of this community seem to have a tendency to eventually opt for traditional monasticism: Tyvaert (2003), p. 169.

62   Meinardus (1966).

63   A governmental decree promulgated in June 1960 constituted a committee to undertake the administration of Coptic Orthodox *waqfs* (religious endowments and property) on the Muslim model. This new organ started work in 1962, recognised by Presidential decree, whose mission was to promote the intellectual and spiritual renaissance of monasteries: Tyvaert (2003), p. 171.

64   *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 10 (1960), p. 268.

65   *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 12 (1962), p. 358.

66 Tyvaert (2003), p. 174. An internal monastic account has been written by ('Un Moine de Saint-Macaire'): Anon (1978).

67 Of scholarly interest is also an edition of the Arabic version of the Letters of St. Antony, see Rubenson (1993).

68 Rubenson (1997), p. 41, note 24.

69 *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 21 (1971), pp. 357–358. The Coptic Orthodox Church possesses a strongly popular character and this was clearly evident in the election procedure, see Meinardus (1967).

70 Tyvaert (2003), p. 176.

71 Tyvaert, (2003), pp. 176–177.

72 Masson (2005).

73 For an account of Matta el-Meskeen's thought see Tawfiq (2000).

74 Sidarous (1980).

75 John Eudes Bamberger writes of Thomas Merton, 'Merton's early and persistent and vast interest in ecumenism was the fruit of prayer than of theological reflection', and 'For him dogma was spirituality because it was to be contemplated, assimilated and lived', in Bamberger (1976), pp. 450–451.

76 Meinardus (1967).

77 Masson (2001).

78 Sidarous (1980).

79 El-Khawaga (1993).

80 Abu-Sahlieh (1979).

81 Suttner (1994); Voigt (1999).

6 The Armenian Church in the contemporary Middle East

1 '. . . the Armenian presence in Arab domains has been uninterrupted since Umayyad times . . .' (Hovannisian, 1974).

2 Dadoyan, 2001, p. 63. According to Panossian, 'The most important colony before the nineteenth century was that of New Julfa (in the Persian Empire), which was the hub of the vast Armenian trade network in the seventeenth century. It was an international trade centre of commerce and the initial financial catalyst of the subsequent national revival of Armenians.' (Panossian, 2006, p. 77).

3 '. . . Armenians were in special favour in Egypt, as many high offices were frequently held by Armenians.' (Hintlian, 1989, p. 2). He goes on to mention two of the most important viziers of the period: Badr el-Jamali (1074–1094) and his son and successor, Al-Afdal (1094–1121). Zeitlian is very informative on Armenian influence during the Fatimid period (Zeitlian, 2006, pp. 32–64). For a brief history of the Armenian presence in Egypt, cf. Meinardus, 2006, pp. 70–72.

4 'In the nineteenth century Muhammad Ali enlisted, with specific intent, scores of Armenian officials, assigning them posts in which they could initiate reforms and foster closer political, economic and cultural relations with the nations of Western Europe.' (Hovannisian, 1974, p. 22). For a study of some of these individuals as well as those who worked for Muhammad Ali's descendants, cf. Zeitlian, 2006, pp. 93–169.

5 Boris Nubar Pasha was the son of this Nubar and was instrumental in founding the highly influential Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) in Cairo in 1906. This was triggered not only by the massacres in Anatolia in the mid-1890s, but more immediately by the clashes between Armenians and Tatars (now known as Azeris) in Transcaucasia between 1905 and 1907. Nubar was also the chief representative of the Armenian national delegation at the Peace Conference in Paris in 1919. Armenian Catholics were also to have no small influence in nineteenth century Egypt: 'During the reign of Muhammad ʿAli, Khosrov Cherakian (1808–1873) served as Muhammad ʿAli's secretary and interpreter [and] Artin

Bey Cherakian (1800–1859) was Minister of Foreign Affairs and Commerce.' (Meinardus, 2006, p. 89).

6 'Les Arméniens constituent l'une des communautés les plus particularistes du Moyen-Orient puisqu'ils se distinguent du milieu dominant aussi bien sur le plan ethnique et linguistique que sur le plan religieux. Ce particularisme s'incarne dans une personnalité collective très complète qui a débouché sur un projet national, jamais véritablement réalisé mais toujours présent dans leur imaginaire et dont leurs structures communautaires constituent en quelques sorte une esquisse. À la différence des autres chrétiens orientaux, qui appartiennent pleinement au monde arabe même s'ils ne partagent pas certaines de ses valeurs dominantes, les Arméniens sont extérieurs tant à l'islam qu'à l'arabité. Ils constituent vraiment un autre peuple que les hasards de l'histoire ont conduit à s'établir (entre autres) en terre arabe.' 'Les Arméniens', p. 479. The author Valognes continues by pointing out that the Armenians are not Semitic, but Indo-European, a primordial difference.

7 'Prior to the outbreak of the First World War, there were more than 80,000 Armenians in Syria, particularly in the *sanjak* of Aleppo, but also in Antioch, Alexandretta, Homs, Latakia, Damascus and Dayr al-Zur. In addition, over 1,000 Armenians lived in Beirut, about 1,300 in Jerusalem, and a few hundred in Baghdad, Basra and Mosul. By 1917, more than 17,000 Armenians had settled in Cairo and Alexandria. In the second half of the nineteenth century, a small Armenian community had also emerged in the Sudan.' (Sanjian, 2001, p. 2).

8 Bournoutian, 1994, p. 59. Concerning the same period, he writes of Armenians elsewhere: '. . . the Armenian communities outside the Ottoman and Russian empires, with the exception of Iran and Egypt, had either assimilated religiously and culturally, or had lost their economic and political influence and were generally reduced to insignificant clusters in a number of urban centers across the old world.' (Ibid., p. 177).

9 Cf. Ibid., Map 8, p. 58.

10 'The size of the community throughout the region meant that it became a political entity; and naturally the Armenians transported their political affiliations with them. In this way the Arab world became the authentic successor to Western (Turkish) Armenia as the repository of Armenian identity, and social and cultural identity. Beirut succeeded Constantinople as the capital of the Western Armenians. (The only communities to rival those of Syria and Lebanon in this respect are those of Boston or California, but these are, despite their large numbers, too thinly spread and too far from their homeland seriously to contest those of the Levant)' (Walker, 1990, p. 364).

There is no mention here of the role of Egyptian Armenians in the region; their authority, it would seem, lay not in numbers, but rather in wealth and prestige. Meinardus: 'Since 1950, the size of the Armenian community has declined from some forty thousand to about fifteen thousand, owing to large-scale emigration, mostly to the Soviet Union.' (2006, p. 72). The Armenian Catholic bishop in Cairo, Mgr. Krikor Coussan, believes the figure now to be twelve thousand in total (Interview, May, 2007).

We may note the following: 'The stability and solidarity of the Egyptian Armenian community allowed for unprecedented advances in education, the blossoming of culture and a proliferation of media outlets. These developments were instrumental in strengthening the national identity and speeding the process of national regeneration, propelling the Egyptian Armenian community to the forefront of the diaspora. Gradually the associations formed in Egypt established branches or chapters in other diasporan communities, extending social welfare services and raising Armenian educational and cultural standards.' (Zeitlian, p. 163). An impressive list is given of these various associations that had their birth in Egypt (p. 163).

11 Between 1914 and 1979, the number of Armenians in Iran had risen from 100,000 to 250,000, mostly concentrated in Tehran, Tabriz and Isfahan. The fall of Mohammad Reza Shah that same year, 1979, and the foundation of the Islamic Republic brought disquiet for the Armenian community and the beginning of a general haemorrhaging of its members. 'Ayatollah Khomeini's restrictions, the Iran–Iraq War, and the economic problems resulting from Iran's isolation, forced the exodus of 100,000 Armenians.' (Bournoutian, 1994, p. 186). However, in recent times, matters have improved as Iran and Armenia have strengthened economic ties, Iran appearing to challenge Turkish influence in the region.

The Iran–Iraq War had deleterious effects also on the Armenian communities in Iraq; they had numbered up to then 70,000. The first Gulf War and the sanctions imposed following that conflict led to further emigration, to such an extent that less than 13,000 appear to have remained. Most Armenians in the country were and are descendants of refugees from Anatolia during the Young Turk period. (Cf. Rassam, 2005, pp. 179–180).

12 The 'Status Quo' was itself an official reaffirmation of the *firman* of 1757 which was meant to prevent tensions between the contending parties. This matter, however, was to lead to friction among the Great Powers themselves, resulting in the Crimean War (1854–1856) (Cf. Thomson, 1964, pp. 222–227).

13 By 'homeland', or 'heartland of Armenia', is meant not only Soviet Armenia, or its present republican successor, but also those larger territories that had made up the six eastern *vilayets* of Ottoman Turkey: Erzerum, Bitlis, Van, Diyarbekir, Harput, Sivas.

14 The Safavids were followed by the Zend dynasty (1747–1779) and then that of the Qajars (1796–1925).

15 For a succinct explanation of the principle of Mandates, cf. Thomson, 1964, p. 806.

16 Cf. Pattie: '(France) exerted considerable influence on the elite of Istanbul, Cairo, Lebanon, and elsewhere, encouraging a tilt towards Paris rather than the New World for many' (2005, p. 136).

17 For the Treaty of Sèvres, cf. Walker, 1990, pp. 291–292.

18 Ibid., pp. 262–267.

19 Ibid., pp. 292–303, where a detailed account is given of the difficulties and failings of the French in Cilicia.

20 According to Moumdjian, over 170,000 Armenian refugees were repatriated to Cilicia at this time, but were unable, or afraid, to return to their homes (1998),' p. 118.

21 The Ankara Agreement, (20 October 1921) between France and Mustafa Kemal, ended 'the state of war between them' (Moumdjian, 1998, p. 166). It involved the French retreat from Cilicia, leaving only the Sanjak of Alexandretta under their control.

22 Akçam, 2007, p. 385.

23 Ibid., p. 414.

24 'Peaceful coexistence with the Arabs, alongside the preservation of cultural–linguistic identity, was a model of success for the Christian Armenians. Unfortunately, during past decades, those tissues of peaceful dwelling that have been woven throughout long centuries have no longer been able to withstand the pressures of Israeli–Palestinian strife. Many Armenians, who have lived in the region for centuries, have left for calmer harbours abroad.

However, and unlike other Armenian communities across the world, Armenians in the Middle East as a whole have upheld a special duty of preserving the Western Armenian language and culture. They have served as guardians of those Holy Places that are essential for the Armenian Church. And being geographically closest to the homeland, the Armenians in the Middle East have been foremost leaders in promoting the Armenian ethos and identity as they relate to the Armenian genocide of 1915.' (Hagopian, 2004, p. 229).

25 'Jaffa, Bethlehem and Jerusalem are the key cities where the Armenian religious and cultural life evolved and flourished over the centuries' (Ibid., p. 223).

26 'In 1967, with the Israeli occupation of the Old City of Jerusalem as well as the West Bank, the Armenians of Jerusalem were reunited with the smaller communities still remaining in Haifa and Jaffa. However, the Israeli occupying authorities started exercising strict controls over the daily lives of Armenians in a manner that had largely been unknown to them under Jordanian rule. Yet the Patriarchate also managed to sustain a cordial working relationship with the Israeli government. As such, Israel allowed the building of a new seminary complex within the Old City walls.' (Ibid.)

27 This did not preclude Russia from herself quickly pursuing similar activity. The *polozhenye* ('statutes') of 1836 ensured a close supervision of Armenian Church affairs within Russian territory (Cf. Walker, 1990, p. 56).

28 The Armenakans were founded in Van in 1885; the Dashnaks in Tiflis in 1890; the Hnchaks in Geneva in 1887 (cf. Nalbandian, 1963). These parties had largely been created because of the perceived failure of the implementation of Clause 61 of the Congress of Berlin of 1878, which itself had been an alteration of Clause 16 of the Treaty of San Stefano that had concluded the Russo–Turkish War, 1877–1878.

29 Cf. Sanjian, 2001, p. 7.

30 Karekin I of Etchmiadzin took issue with the commonly used term *azgabahbanoum*, finding 'preservation' too static. He preferred *azgagerdoum*, which 'conveys the sense of a "building-up of a nation" (cf. 'Karekin I, 1996, pp. 67–77).

31 According to Zeitlian, the rivalry between the Armenian political parties was not so evident in Egypt. (Zeitlian, 2006, pp. 161–162). However, contrast this with Tölölyan's view: note 38.

32 Cf. Pattie, 2005, p. 128.

33 'This group [the Dashnaktsutiun] dominated the Armenian communities in which I grew up in Aleppo, Cairo and Beirut. Its domination was sharply contested. It was enthusiastically celebrated by its adherents and profoundly resented by its opponents . . .' (Tölölyan, 2002, p. 9).

34 Personal anecdote related in Rome in 2006 by Sister Arminé, Mother Superior of the Armenian Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, concerning her childhood in Lebanon. Through the overriding influence of the ARF, ' "Old country" regional dialects were relegated to the private sphere, the use of Turkish was condemned, and Turkish speakers were shamed into learning Armenian. It was made very clear: to be Armenian one had to speak Armenian. In this way a polyglot community was reshaped into a monolingual community. Every other language, even the Arabic of the host society in the Middle East, was considered a second language' (Panossian, 2006, p. 299). Such a policy had less effect elsewhere in the Diaspora.

35 Cf. Sanjian, 2001, p. 5.

36 Cf. Walker, 1990, pp. 223–225.

37 Cf. Sanjian, 2001, p. 5. Pattie, 'An ethno-religious identity was encouraged by many of the legal systems of the region, continuing Ottoman traditions.' (2005, p. 132).

38 Tölölyan writes of 'the complex Armenian vocabulary of diaspora' and lists a number of terms connected with this phenomenon (cf. 2002, p. 19).

39 Cf. Dadoyan, 2001, p. 63. According to Aram I: '1915 to 1940 can be characterized as a period of recovery, and 1945 to 1960 as a period of re-organization. The renaissance of the Armenian communities began in the 1960s, particularly with the landmark celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Armenian genocide in 1965' (Aram I, 'The witness of the Armenian Church in the Middle East', 2001b, p. 37).

40 Sanjian, 2001, p. 6.

41 There is the interesting case in Jerusalem where Arabic was abandoned in favour

of Armenian by the 'indigenous' Armenian inhabitants due to the numbers of Armenian refugees that arrived and influenced them in this respect (cf. Sandjian, 2001, p. 8). Speaking of the Armenian Catholic community in Jerusalem, Hagopian writes 'Like the Armenian Orthodox, their rites and liturgy stress the Armenian language and culture. They do not engage in proselytism, and have retained Armenian as their spoken language.' Hagopian, 2004, p. 236).

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 Present for this anniversary were not only the two Catholicoses of Etchmiadzin and Antelias, but also, by invitation, Patriarch Batanian of the Armenian Catholic Church (Patriarch 1962–1976) as well as Reverend Hovhannes Aharon-yan, President of the Union of Evangelical Churches of the Middle East. (Cf. Corley, 1996, p. 328).

45 Walker, 1990, p. 380.

46 'It is estimated that, by the mid-1920s, there were about 100,000 Armenian refugees and orphans settled in Syria, over 40,000 in Lebanon, some 10,000 in Iraq, a similar number in Palestine and Transjordan, and another 25,000 in Egypt. A new wave of around 10,000 Armenian migrants from Turkey reached Syria in 1929–30. These latecomers were basically peasants from remote villages, who had earlier escaped deportation for various reasons. In the meantime, thousands of other Armenians, who had initially fled into these Arab countries continued to join their relatives or seek a more promising future in the Americas' (Sanjian, 2001, p. 4).

47 Hovannisian, 1974, p. 19.

48 However, compare Pattie: 'Today relatively few diaspora Armenians till the soil, though most were farmers at the time of their dispersal from Western Armenia.' (2005, p. 130).

49 Cf. Hourani, 2005, p. 336.

50 Personal anecdote: this emerged in conversation with an Armenian Aleppan youth working at a children's summer camp in Armenia, 2004.

51 Concerning the Middle East: '. . . Armenians in each country have generally maintained non-aligned or apolitical stands . . .' (Pattie, 2005, p. 133).

52 In the Lebanese National Assembly, the present balance – includes Armenian representation, both Apostolic and Catholic.

53 McPherson, 1983, p. 220. Later, McPherson writes: 'My office was beseiged by refugees, many bleeding and with clothes rent, bewailing that their houses had been looted, their friends murdered, and that Greeks and Armenians were openly being slaughtered in the main streets.' (p. 229).

54 'European mandatory powers saw the Armenians as a community which they could use to secure their shaky and resented authority. Armenians were offered Lebanese citizenship in August 1924, largely with the intention of bolstering the Christian community against the nationalism which the Muslims manifested. In Syria, the French drafted seasoned Armenian fighters into levies for suppressing the Druze revolt (1925–7). But Arabs are not Turks, and Armenians soon realised they should work with, rather than against, their new hosts' (Walker, 1990, p. 364).

55 Even today some villages in northern Syria are still Armenian-speaking and a number of seminarians studying in Antelias, because they are from this area, do not always have a proper grasp of Arabic. In consequence, the seminary itself at the present time cannot be accepted as part of the University of Beirut, and will not be so till the level of Arabic has improved. (Personal anecdote related by a staff member at the Antelias seminary, 2004).

56 Hovannisian, 1974, p. 22.

57 'Armenian emigrations to Kuwait started after the Second World War, and into the United Arab Emirates in 1975. The civil war in Lebanon, unfavorable social and economic conditions in Syria, Lebanon, and Iran, encouraged Armenians to

seek the benefits of the economically flourishing Arab Gulf. '(Basmajian, 2001, p. 195). Cf. also Sanjian, 2001, p. 12.

58 'The Ottoman period is crucial to understanding the present diaspora. The *millet* system of organizing the peoples of the empire by religion effectively enforced and extended the religious aspect of identity, consolidating political power around the Armenian Church.' (Pattie, 2005, p. 127).

59 He had also held this political office for all non-Chalcedonian Christians within Ottoman domains.

60 There was a more localized loss in Cilicia in 1909, which naturally affected the Catholicosate of Sis. Many refugees from these earlier massacres arrived in the Arab domains of the empire, precursors of the outright disaster of 1915.

61 Cf. Dadoyan, *The Contribution of the Armenian Church to the Christian Witness in the Middle East*, 2001, pp. 62–64. For a detailed exposition of the settlement of the catholicosate at Antelias, cf. Payaslian, 2008.

62 Cf. Dadoyan, 2001, pp. 61–62.

63 The origin of the Armenian patriarchate itself seems to be in dispute, some believing it to date to the time shortly after the first Armenian settlements in or around Jerusalem, others to the restoration of Jerusalem after the Persian invasion of 614. The much later date of 1311 during the Mamluk period is a third alternative.

64 Sanjian, 2001, p. 5. He gives sources for this in footnote 18.

65 'One circumstance that accounted for the appeal of Protestantism to some of our people at one time was economic advantage.' (Nersoyan, n.d., p. 8).

66 *Atti della Conferenza Episcopale Armena. Roma–Maggio–Luglio 1928*, pp. 178–187. The friar stresses how it is necessary to establish Armenian Schools in Jerusalem and Transjordan (cf. p. 182), and for 'zealous priests' to be sent, otherwise there is danger that these newly-converted would return to the 'schism' (cf. p. 186).

   Panossian, referring to late nineteenth-century views held by Armenian nationalists: '. . . despite profound cultural differences between eastern and western Armenians, no Armenian on either side maintained that the others were not Armenian, even if they did not speak the language. What is more, even assimilated Armenians in the Russian aristocracy were referred to as Armenians for generations. Armenians who had converted to Catholicism or had become Protestant were considered part of the nation as well (sometimes barely, in popular view!) but an Armenian who converted to Islam was "lost", no longer part of the nation. This religion-based definition . . . remained a central core of national identity.' (2006, p. 184, note 102).

67 Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan dismisses the accusation that proselytism was afoot: '. . . there is no evidence that the Roman Catholics were making any special efforts to take advantage of the disarray in the Armenian Church during the years following the great tragedy of the Genocide of the Armenian people. Armenian Catholics had suffered the blow of massacres, deportations and all kinds of tribulations as heavily as the rest of the people.' (Nersoyan, 1998, p. 17). This immediately follows his severe criticism of '. . . the utterly false notion that the continuation of the schism [between Antelias and Etchmiadzin] would counter the allegedly strong propaganda by which the Roman Catholics were said to be trying to endanger the Armenian Church by proselytizing her children by means of "eye catching gold pieces from the treasury of St. Peter." (Ibid.) [The quote concerning the "gold pieces" is from Hatitian, 1968, p. 33].

68 Cf. Agagianian, 1939, pp. 6–7.

69 Cf. *Atti della Conferenza Episcopale Armena. Roma–Maggio–Luglio 1928*. The move was completed in 1931, a new patriarchal centre being established in Beirut itself. Bzommar, though the headquarters of the Institute of Bzommar missionary clergy, was seen as somewhat remote from the Catholic refugees who now found

themselves in the region. (For a history of the Institute, cf. Terzian, 1983). The present Patriarch-Catholicos is Nerses Bedros XIX Tarmouni, elected in October, 1999.

Valognes comments as follows on the transfer to Lebanon, 'Même si de larges effectifs ont désormais gagné l'Amérique et l'Europe, l'installation de leur hiérarchie au Liban maintient les Arméniens catholiques dans une dépendance étroite à l'égard du monde arabe et de ses problèmes'. (1994, p. 494). This settlement in the Arab world inevitably meant an involvement in that world and its problems. This too could equally be said of the Apostolic Church.

70 'A la veille de la première guerre mondiale, avec 137 églises, 179 pasteurs, trois séminaires et plusieurs centaines d'écoles, le protestantisme arménien devient une institution importante.' (Beledian, 1994, p. 22).

71 Dadoyan, 2001, p. 63.

72 Cf. (Archbishop) Nersoyan, 1998.

73 Tensions between the catholicosates were not new, being founded on the immediate rivalry that arose when the decision made at the Council of Vagharshapat in 1441 to transfer the Catholicosate of Sis back to Etchmiadzin was rejected by the then catholicos, Grigor IX (1439–1451). In consequence, Kirakos I (1441–1443) was elected by the Council in his stead. Thus the two lines continue to this day, those of Etchmiadzin and Cilicia (cf. Dadoyan, 2001, pp. 21–77).

74 Cf. Artinian, 1988.

75 'There were massive and organized attempts by the Soviet authorities to use Holy Etchmiadzin as an instrument to control the Armenian communities in the Diaspora. The Catholicosate of Cilicia reacted vehemently to these extremely grave projects. In addition to the divergences that already existed in a number of matters between Etchmiadzin and Antelias, this political dimension resulting from Communist politics, further complicated relations between the Sees.' (Dadoyan, 2001, p. 67).

76 Cf. Sarkissian, 1969, pp. 515–517. Zareh I was elected after Vazgen had left for Cairo where the latter declared the election 'defective and unacceptable.' (Ibid., p. 516). For a sympathetic interpretation of this whole affair and where the 'Cold War' is seen as vital to a proper understanding of the matter, cf. Walker, 1990, pp. 368–370. 'Zareh's election effectively sealed the break in relations between the two church jurisdictions which persisted until the reconciliation of the late 1980s, a break caused and exacerbated by the East–West divide of the Cold War and the failure by the communist authorities in Soviet Armenia and the Armenian political parties of the diaspora to keep politics out of church affairs.' (Corley, p. 295).

77 Cf. Ashjian, 1995, p. 140.

78 For an example, cf. 'Assessing Aram I's Visit to North America', *Armenian Mirror Spectator*, 29 November 2005.

79 The original breach in the United States was confirmed by the establishment of the Prelacy of Eastern, Western United States and Canada in 1958, to be followed in 1973 by the formation of a separate Western Prelacy, and finally the creation of one for Canada in 2002.

80 Aram I, 2001b, p. 32.

81 Armenian Catholic religious order founded by Mkhitar of Sebastia (1676–1749), with monasteries in Venice and Vienna, and with schools in a number of countries where Armenians are to be found, including the Middle East (cf., among others, Zekiyan, 1987).

82 Cf. Hovannisian, 1982, p. 525.

83 'The repatriation brought over 100,000 Armenians, mostly from Greece and the Middle East. Most of these were the immigrants who had been displaced during the 1915–1922 period. Their arrival in a socialist state which was devastated

during the war was not particularly welcomed by the local population . . . They were condescendingly referred to as *aghbar* (which can best be rendered as "the poor relations").' (Bournoutian, 1994, p. 164).

84 It is understood that he was choked to death with electric wires. Cf. Ashjian, 1995, p.117.

85 Agagianian had arrived in the Middle East from Rome to take up his position as patriarch virtually a novice to the region, having until then paid only two brief visits to Bzommar.

86 This was awarded him during an official visit to Syria in 1955.

87 Sanjian, 2001, p. 6. Unfortunately, bitterness between the various protagonists did spill into violence and even, occasionally, to actual assassination, the most notorious example being the murder of Archbishop Ghevont Tourian in New York in 1933.

88 'Moins étroitement liée que l'Église orthodoxe au destin du people arménien, n'ayant pas non plus reconnu aux laïques une place aussi considérable dans le gouvernement de ses affaires, l'Église arménienne catholique attache certes une grande importance à la "question nationale" mais ne s'est pas laissée envahir par les problèmes (et les partis) politiques au détriment de sa mission religieuse.' (Valognes, 1994, p. 500).

89 Hagopian speaking of Jerusalem: 'The Armenian Catholics also have their own club, Arax, which was established in 1935. It is at the centre of the life of Armenian Catholics and includes some Armenian Orthodox members too. This is the case with the Orthodox Armenian organizations as well – being Armenian is the only criterion, while confessional affiliations are meant to assume a subsidiary relevance.' (2004, p. 237).

90 1974, p. 23.

91 Ibid.

92 Dadoyan, 2001, p. 66.

93 'Education remains highly desirable, but tension emerges between the pressure for traditional Armenian-language based schooling and a more Western-oriented, often English-based education that is seen as providing more sophisticated job opportunities.' (Pattie, 2005, p. 130).

94 Walker, 1990, p. 370.

95 Ibid.

96 'Political realities have also affected the Armenian Patriarchate in relation to the election of patriarchs. Every newly-elected Armenian Patriarch must now obtain the formal and written approval of the Jordanian, Israeli and Palestinian authorities.' (Hagopian, 2004, p. 234).

97 'In the last decade, and under the leadership of Patriarch Torkom II, the Armenian Patriarchate has become active once more in its attempts to strengthen the Armenian community of the Holy Land. There is a renewed impetus to train young students at the seminary, and there are many seminarians in Jerusalem now from Armenia.' (Ibid., p. 241) We may note: 'Today, the Jerusalem Patriarchate has jurisdiction over less than 5,000 Armenians in Israel, the West Bank and Jordan.' (Ibid., p. 232).

98 Löffler, 2001, p. 140.

99 Cf. Meinardus, 2006, p. 68.

100 The Catholic 'family' of the Council consists of Armenian, Chaldean, Greek Melchite, Latin, Maronite and Syrian Catholics.

101 Hagopian, 2004, pp. 243–248.

102 Ibid., p. 241. The four are as follows: one Greek Orthodox, one Catholic, one Armenian Orthodox, and one Protestant.

103 Cf. Meinardus, 2006, p. 129.

104 Cf. Corley, 1996, pp. 303–304.

105 An event of some importance was the visit of Pope John Paul II to Jerusalem in March 2000; among those involved in the proceedings was the Armenian Orthodox Patriarchate. Much earlier, in 1964, Pope Paul VI had visited the Patriarchate and met Patriarch Derderian. The present holder of the see, Torkum, had himself visited the Vatican in December 1996 in the company of Karekin I of Etchmiadzin, formerly Catholicos Karekin II of Cilicia. 'All these activities within the ecumenical movement have consolidated the universal standing of the Armenian Church despite its dwindling numbers and harsh political realities.' (Hagopian, 2004, p. 243).

106 Manoukian, 2005, pp. 15–16.

107 Aram I, 2001a, p. 16.

108 *Armenian Reporter*, 9 December, 2006, p. 18.

109 Aram I: 'As for language, in my opinion classical Armenian must continue to be the basic language of the liturgy. This is the language in which we have communicated with God for centuries, by which we have created our spiritual and moral values, we have articulated our theological perceptions. It is through classical Armenian that we have kept our cultural heritage. Classical Armenian is an essential ingredient of our spirituality. We cannot simply keep it in the treasury of our history. However, the biblical readings, the sermons and major prayers may be performed in modern Armenian, and even in English and French as the necessity requires. In doing this we should bear in mind that the goal of liturgy is to create spirituality, which helps a Christian enter in communion with God. Spirituality transcends language barriers.' ('Towards a Renewed Armenian Church', 2001b, p. 22).

110 *Badarak* signifies 'sacrifice': the Divine Liturgy.

111 Aram I, 2001a, pp. 16–17.

112 His achievements were twin: 'he broke down the barriers between the Constantinople Armenians and the men of the provinces; and with his unswerving devotion to his people he criticized the government relentlessly for its lethargy, corruption, injustice and violence.' (Walker, 1990, p. 103).

113 2006, p. 292.

114 'The community has now dwindled to scarcely one-third of its pre-World War II size, with the remaining ten to twelve thousand members required to shoulder the staggering obligation of sustaining the network of national institutions' (Hovannisian, 1974, p. 24). He is speaking of the situation of the Armenian Egyptian community that deteriorated following the withdrawal of Syria from the United Arab Republic. For the background to this development, cf. ibid., pp. 23–24.

115 Catholicos Karekin II of Etchmiadzin has recently suppressed attempts in the United States to introduce some English into the '*badarak*'.

7 Eastern Orthodox Christianity in the Middle East

1 Vryonis, 1981, pp. 59–61.

2 Cragg, 1992, p. 79.

3 Hourani, 2005, pp. 201–204.

4 Papadakis, 1984, pp. 8–34.

5 Issawi, 1982, p. 270.

6 Hopwood, 1969.

7 Said, 1980, p. 145.

8 Kedourie, 1984, p. 319.

9 Yapp, 1991, p. 9.

10 Ware, 2000.

11 McGrath, 2004.

12 Ware, 2000.

13 Falah G.-W., 2003.
14 Watson, 2004b.
15 Sabella, 1991, p. 75.
16 Christiansen, 2005.
17 Geraisy, 1994, pp. 47–48.
18 Peretz, 1977, pp. 70–71.
19 Kabha, 2003, pp. 169–189.
20 Raheb, 2002, pp. 97–102.
21 Schmemann, 1993.
22 Dumper, 1995, pp. 285.
23 Roussos, 2003.
24 Two or three thousand Greek Orthodox are the only Christian community in Gaza. Glass, 1994, pp. 376–377.
25 Kreuz, 1992.
26 Ateek, 1995, pp. 318–319.
27 Papademetriou, 2004.
28 Hopwood, 1969, p. 159.
29 Dawn, 1993, p. 381.
30 Davie, 1993, p. 313.
31 Roussos, 1998, pp. 33–64.
32 Hourani, 1995, p. 276.
33 Salibi, 1988, p. 49.
34 Azar, 1999, pp. 67, 125.
35 Haddad, 1981, pp. 82, 86.
36 Picard, 1977.
37 Amos, 1992.
38 Barak, 2002.
39 Cobban, 1985, p. 103.
40 Cragg, 1992, pp. 219–220.
41 Humphrey, 2004.
42 Gellner, 1983, p. 106. See also Landau, 2001.
43 Schumann, 2004.
44 Nabti, 2004.
45 Humphrey, 2004.
46 Hanania, 1995, pp. 206–207.
47 Sabella, 1991, pp. 75–76.
48 Bamyeh, 2001.
49 P. Walters, 2002, pp. 357–364.
50 Henry, 2002.
51 Schmemann, 1969.
52 Nahas, 1993.
53 Parsons, 1975.
54 Tarek, 2003.
55 Ware, 2000.
56 Parsons, 1975.
57 'The Crisis in the Hierarchy of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch', *Eastern Churches Review*, vol. 1, (1966–1967): 178–179.
58 Ware, 2000.

8 Between Rome and Antioch

 1 Accounts of the history of the Syrian Orthodox Church can be found in the following studies, Hage, 1966, 1987; Kawerau, 1955; Dupuy, 1990: Zaide, 'L'Église syrienne'.

2 For an introduction to the Syriac tradition see Sélis, 1988: this work has been described as both a 'mini-encyclopaedia' of Syrian Christianity, and a 'Syriac *Summa*'. See also, Valognes, 1994.

3 Teule, 1999.

4 Teule, 2002.

5 On the early history of relations between the Syrian Orthodox Church and Rome, I am only aware of the unpublished study Hayek, 1936. The author of this study became in time Ignace Antoine II Hayek who succeeded Gabriel Tappouni in 1968.

6 On the presence of Latin Catholic missions in the Ottoman territories see Heyberger, 1994, 1988, 1989.

7 For an account of the early relations between the Maronites and the Syrian Orthodox Church see Bcheiry, 2003.

8 Metzler, 1973; and for the Ottoman background Hajjar, 1968.

9 Bardakjian, 1982.

10 Romeny, 2005.

11 On the Syrian Catholic Church in 18th century Syria, see Chalfoun, 1986. See also Bcheiry, 2004.

12 Raquez, 1973; Hajjar, 1979.

13 Heyberger, 2003.

14 All Syrian Orthodox and Syrian Catholic Patriarchs of Antioch carry as the first part of their accession name Ignatius, the name of the first bishop of Antioch. Similarly, the Maronite Patriarchs of Antioch each take the name Peter, reflecting the tradition that the apostle Peter founded the first Christian Church in Antioch.

15 Chalfoun, 1979; which is based upon the authors unpublished thesis, *Le Patriarche Michel Giarvé*, Rome, Pontifico Institutum Orientalium Studiorum 1961.

16 The Syrian Catholic Patriarchs have been: André Aqidjan (1662–1677), Pierre IV Sahbadin 1678–1701, Isaac ben Jubair (1703–1721), Michael Jarwé (1780–1800), Michael Daher (1802–1810), Simon Zora (1814–1818), Pierre Jarweh (1820–1852), Antoine Semheri I (1853–1864), Philippe Arkousse (1865–1873), George Solhote (1874–1891), Behnam Benni (1892–1897), Ephrem Rahmani (1898–1929), Gabriel Tappouni (1929–1968), Antoine II Hayek (1968–998), Ignace Moussa I Daoud (1998–2001), Pierre VII Abdel–Ahad (2001–2008), Ignace Joseph III Younan (2009–). See O'Mahony, 2006b; Brock, 2008.

17 See S. Vailhé, 'Antioche: V: Le Patriarcat syrien catholique'. The German Jesuit scholar of Syriac Christianity Wilhelm de Vries sj wrote a series of articles which although somewhat dated give to the historical background of Syrian church ecclesiology: on the Syrian Catholic Church, de Vries 1956, and for the Syrian Orthodox Church tradition, de Vries 1952, 1984, 1957 and 'Le sens ecclesial hors de l'Église catholique chez les Syriens (jacobites et nestoriens)'.

18 *Acta* vol. 175 (1812) f. 49 quoted in Raquez, 1973, p. 20.

19 *Acta* vol. 180 (1817) ff. 104–134.

20 *Acta* vol. 168 (1801) ff. 157–159; *Acta* vol. 175 (1812) f. 71.

21 The Syrian Orthodox pilgrimage and presence in the Holy City was of historic importance see: Palmer, 1991, 1992; Koriah-Karkenny, 1976; Every, 1945, 1947.

22 We have a record of another Syrian Catholic bishop visiting Rome, Heyberger, 1995.

23 On the relations between the Syrian Orthodox Church and the Anglican Church see: Taylor, 2005 and 2006.

24 Farah, 1976 and 1986.

25 'Hierarchia catholica' VI, p. 88, VII, p. 80 quoted in Raquez, 1973.

26 *Acta* vol. 189 (1826) ff. 514–543.

27 The conflict between the Maronite Patriarch Yûsuf Hubaysh (1823–1845) and the Protestant missionaries started in the early nineteenth century when Patriarch Yûsuf condemned their activities and forbade contact with them in 1824. Into this

difficult situation stepped a 28-year-old Maronite Aṡad al-Shidyâq (1798–circa 1830), who despite the patriarch's ruling offered his services to the missionaries in March 1825 as an Arabic instructor and translator. In time he joined the Protestant church. A bitter dispute with the Maronite patriarch and church ensued, which resulted in Aṡad al-Shidyâq being confined in the custody of the patriarchate. The missionaries saw him as a martyr. See Kerr, 2003.

28 *Acta* vol. 190 (1827) ff. 407–408. Some comparison can be made with regard to the position of the Coptic Catholic Church in Egypt and its relations with Rome see, O'Mahony, 2006c.

29 See the studies by Whooley, 2006 and 2004b.

30 *Acta* vol. 191 (1828) ff. 25–26, see also Raquez, 1973, p. 23.

31 On the Syrian Orthodox church tradition of synod see Mounyer, 1963.

32 *Acta* vol. 214 (1852) f. 79, see also Raquez, 1973, p. 24.

33 *Acta* vol. 214 (1852) f. 92, see also Raquez, 1973, p. 24.

34 Vosté, 1942. See further Habbi, 1971.

35 de Clercq, 1952. See Joseph Hajjar's comments on the relationship and question of authority between the synod and Rome, Hajjar, 1973.

36 *AOSC Siri* vol. 4 (1868) f. 86.

37 *AOSC Siri* vol. 4 (1868) ff. 83–138, see also Raquez, 1973, pp. 24–26.

38 He was born on 11 April 1827 at Diarbekir. His family, originally from Mardin, were distinguished compared to their circle, but had had to leave the city and move to Diarbekir because of the internecine quarrels between Christians there. He studied at the Patriarchal Seminary at Charfeh (Mount Lebanon) under Mgr Saad, Syrian Archbishop of Tripoli and a former Propaganda pupil. He studied humanities and theology as well as Arabic and the language of his ecclesial community, Syriac. He was ordained priest in 1850 by Mgr Samhiri, Archbishop of Mardin and the future Patriarch. Fr Arqous initially exercised his ministry in his native city and then, in 1855, was sent as a missionary to other Christian communities in Orfa (Edessa). Having returned to his native city, he carried out an apostolate among the Jacobites, and, in 1857, was named Patriarchal Procurator of Diarbekir, a role that he held at the same time as teaching Arabic, Syriac and Turkish until 1864, when Patriarch Ignatius Antony Samhiri died. In the meantime, on 28 July 1862, at the age of 35, he had been consecrated Bishop of Diarbekir by the Patriarch. C. Korolevskij, cf. 'Arqous'.

39 de Clercq, 1952; Manna, 1971.

40 C. Korolevskij, 'Benni Behnam', *Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie Ecclésiastique*, Vol. VII, cols 1,352–1,360.

41 *Mansi*, Vol. 53, pp. 83–85.

42 *Mansi*, Vol. 52, pp. 551–561.

43 On the Melkite presence at the First Vatican Council see Hajjar, 1987, 1970; Nasrallah, 1961.

44 de Clercq, 1952, pp. 599–627.

45 de Clercq, 1952, p. 627.

46 Sélis, 1988, p. 38.

47 For a particularly important collection of documents detailing these widespread massacres, see *Documents sur les événements de Mardine, 1915–1920* (1996/1997). For an eyewitness account of French Dominicain, Jacques Rhétoré see ibid 2004.

48 'Elevation for St. Thomas Christians', *Tablet* 2 April 2005. An interesting development in this church was the foundation of Kurisumala Ashram in 1958. This is a monastic community based on a strict Cistercian interpretation of the Benedictine monastic rule, the observance of the West Syrian liturgical tradition, and forms of asceticism in use among Hindu ascetics. It has become a spiritual center for Christians and Hindus alike. See the study by its founder Francis Acharya (1912–2002) in ibid 1994.

49 'The Syrian Catholic Church', *Eastern Churches Journal: a Review of Eastern Christendom*, v. 6, no.1, 1999, pp. 289–290.

50 The Congregation for the Oriental Churches, one of the offices of the Roman Curia, was established in 1862 as part of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith and became an autonomous institution during the pontificate of Benedict XV. It has the same role with regard to bishops, clergy, religious and faithful in the Eastern Catholic Churches that other Curial offices have in relation to the Latin Church. The Congregation for the Oriental Churches also oversees the Jesuit-directed Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome, an important centre for Eastern Christian studies.

51 The liturgy and the later meeting of the pope and Syrian Catholic bishops is described briefly in *Eastern Churches Journal: a Review of Eastern Christendom* v. 8, no. 2, Summer 2001, pp. 306–307.

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Index