

# The Antiochian - N° 2:1 (2009)

The Newsletter of *Antioch*:  
A Center for Antiochian Orthodox Christian Studies and Research

## The Work of Antioch

At present Fr. Elia is still concentrating on locating manuscripts and documents, determining which are Chalcedonian Orthodox, and writing a description of their contents. The ultimate aim of this work is to compile a catalogue of this corpus of manuscripts with inventories, indices, and bibliographies. We hope that the contents and the colophons of these manuscripts will help scholars in the study of every aspect relating to Antiochian Orthodox Christian heritage. In this issue of *The Antiochian* we offer a view into several of the many different characteristics of these manuscripts, and the kinds of information to be gained from them which have immediate relevance for our times.

## Manuscript Colophons

Traditionally, the author or copyist of a manuscript would include a line or a few sentences mentioning his name and the date and place where he copied the manuscript (e.g. monastery, church or village). This is usually found at the end of the manuscript, and is called a 'colophon'. From colophons, we can learn a great deal of valuable information about history and the Church. Further, they often contain unique material that the rest of the manuscript does not. For example, a Gospel book may be copied over and over again throughout the centuries, but where it was copied, by whom, and under what circumstances will change. This kind of material is often the only access we now have to persons whose memory is otherwise lost to antiquity. We may similarly learn the names of towns, churches, monasteries, and bishoprics, many of which are now ruined or have totally disappeared, and these may help in archaeological excavations. One may also learn that a church or monastery was once Orthodox and now belongs to another Christian community, or was turned into a mosque. We may further find information on

various aspects of church life, such as demographic changes within a community, or natural disasters affecting many communities. As one can see, manuscript colophons are great sources of information on a wide variety of aspects relating to the Church. Some specific examples of how this material can affect our own lives are seen in the following articles.



Two folios from a Lectionary in Syriac,  
Mt. Lebanon, 15<sup>th</sup> c.

The last folio (bottom) shows a long colophon in Arabic with some decorations (Private Collection)

## **An Historical Word Place Names**

Place names (toponyms) are crucial to Christian living in our day, as by knowing the names of places where saints lived, we are able to better venerate them, keeping their lives in our memory by remembering where they are from, and visiting those places from time to time. The life of St. Maron of the fifth century (Feastday: 14 February), written by Theodoret, the Bishop of Cyrus, gives us an interesting example of this importance. St. Maron, who adorns the godly choir of the saints, moved to the wilderness near Antioch only living in a small tent from time to time. He was given the gift of healing and helped many people in both soul and body. Theodoret tells us that after his death two villages fought over his body and that only one of the villages [Brad] gained access to his relics. But, he tells us that we are all able to gain St. Maron's blessing even at a distance, by reading his life, and keeping his memory (*A History of the Monks of Syria*, 1985, p. 117-9).



*St. Maron the Ascetic*

In a Syriac and Arabic manuscript containing a Triodion and Pentecostarion, Fr. Elia has recently made an interesting discovery relating to toponyms. He read in a colophon of this manuscript, kept in the Bodleian Library at Oxford University, that the text was copied at the Monastery of St. Thomas in Hardin, Mt. Lebanon, on Friday 24 August 1492. This manuscript is one of many other Orthodox manuscripts written in this

monastery. Today, however, there are no Orthodox living in Hardin, and it was not until Fr. Elia began seeing such colophons that he realized that many of the churches and monasteries in Hardin used to be Orthodox. He has been able to visit many of their ruins now, and can confirm that this is so. He has further determined that Orthodox Christians lived in the area until sometime in 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century, after which time Hardin has been exclusively populated by Maronite Catholics.

## **A Word on Terminology Hierarchical Lists and Church Fathers**

In the 7<sup>th</sup> century a monk named Theodore who came from Tarsus in the Patriarchate of Antioch, was living in Rome. At that time, many monks fled to Rome following the Islamic invasions of Syria and Palestine in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The pope realized that this well educated monk was the perfect person to become the new Archbishop of Canterbury, and in the course of a short time Theodore was ordained deacon, priest, and Archbishop. Bede tells us that soon after arriving in England he visited every part of the island and was well received everywhere he went, teaching the Christian way of life. He was the first archbishop who was obeyed by the entire Church in England. He taught the people poetry, astronomy, the Scriptures, Latin and Greek, and more. Bede writes that, "the people eagerly sought the new-found joys of the kingdom of heaven, and all who wished for instruction in the reading of the Scriptures found teachers ready to hand." Theodore consecrated bishops in suitable places, and with their help corrected abuses wherever he found them. Theodore died in 690 after 22 years of shepherding his flock in England (Feastday: 19 September). He was buried in the monastery of St. Peter, now known as St. Augustine's Abbey in Canterbury. Bede writes, "It may be said of him, as of all his colleagues in the same dignity, that 'their bodies are buried in peace, but their names live for evermore.' To summarize briefly, the churches of the English made greater progress during his pontificate than they had ever done before." (*Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Penguin, 1990, pp. 203, 205, 277).





*St. Theodore of Tarsus, Archbishop of Canterbury*

In England it is a blessing to have such a detailed historical record given to us by Bede, but we do not have such a record for many other places in the Church. He shows us clearly the names of many bishops, and how the bishops of England were in the tradition of Apostolic Succession. This is quite important since we can confirm that the bishops in England were not simply inventing their own version of Christianity, but keeping a tradition handed down to them from the Apostles. For other parts of the world, however, hierarchical lists are not so complete, and there is much work to be done to document when and where bishops and patriarchs lived, when they took their sees, and by whom they were succeeded.

One example of an advance in this kind of documentation was made by Fr. Elia when he read another one of the Arabic manuscripts kept in Oxford. The manuscript is a liturgical book (Alleluiarion and Tropologion) which has a colophon providing a number of details unknown until now, such as the names of several hierarchs, when they were enthroned, and the dates of their deaths. Perhaps most important, the manuscript gives us the date of the death of two of the Patriarchs of Antioch, which have not been known until now. Joachim, the Patriarch of

Antioch and all the East, died on 7 October 1592, and Patriarch Michael died on 25 December of the same year. Without this manuscript from Kaftun, many historical details would be lost, and these help us to clearly document the Apostolic succession of the Antiochian Orthodox Church.

### **Language Use in Church**

In July 1860 a terrible genocide of the Antiochian Christians took place in Damascus, the full history of which has yet to be written. It was then that St. Raphael, the Archbishop of Brooklyn, and the Good Shepherd of the Lost Sheep of America, “while still in his mother’s womb, was forced to flee from his homeland to avoid imminent death”. Thus begins the life of Raphael (Reposed in 1915; Feastday: 27 February). He was a unique figure, who worked tirelessly bringing Orthodoxy to the many different peoples of North America. He was the first Orthodox Bishop consecrated in the New World, and although under Russian jurisdiction, ministered to Arabs, Russians, Greeks, Americans, and people of every diverse background, often focusing on the youth as the carriers of the *Holy Living Tradition* of Orthodoxy to future generations.



*St. Raphael of Brooklyn,  
Shepherd of the Lost Sheep in America*

“St. Raphael became convinced that the use of the English language was an absolute necessity for the spiritual formation of these young people. He began advocating and advancing the use of the English language in the Church.” Learning from St. Paul who said, it is best to pray in an understandable language (1 Cor. 14:13-19), he began serving the Divine Liturgy in English as often as possible so that the people of North America could learn Orthodoxy (*Our Father among the Saints Raphael Bishop of Brooklyn*, Antakya Press, 2000, pp. 4, 40-41, 50-51, 57-58).

In the same way, Fr. Elia has noted that in the prologue of a copy of an Arabic manuscript of the 17<sup>th</sup> century that someone, probably during the time of Patriarch Euthymios (1634-35), translated an Epistolarion (Acts and the Epistles) from Syriac into Arabic. The main reason for such a translation was to make it possible for those who did not know Syriac to understand the book of Acts and the Epistle readings in the Church. As this was done in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it serves both as part of our evidence for the decline of the use of Syriac in the Antiochian Orthodox Church, as well as the holiness of Patriarch Euthymios, who, like St. Raphael, showed great concern for his flock and their abilities to understand the liturgy in their daily lives.

## Antioch Centre

\* To advance the education of the public in the history, culture and society of the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch.

\* To facilitate and enhance the study of Antiochian history, demography, hagiography, spirituality, theology, liturgy, biography, archaeology, and linguistics.

\* To publish and disseminate information on the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch that is otherwise unavailable to the general public.

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*The following announcement about Antioch Centre has appeared in a number of academic journals and periodicals.*

**‘Antioch’: A New Initiative for the Study of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch**  
**Dr. Sebastian Brock** (Oxford University, UK)

In 2006 a new charity, named ‘Antioch’, was set up and registered with the aim of promoting research on the cultural heritage of the Rum Orthodox (Chalcedonian) Patriarchate of Antioch. Although the early period, up to the time of the Arab conquests, is comparatively well known, the subsequent centuries have been very little studied, despite their importance, both for the history of the Orthodox Church as a whole, and for that of the Middle East in general. Discoveries in recent years of medieval wall paintings in Syria and Lebanon, as well as of hitherto unknown manuscripts, forgotten saints, and the identification of new Christian archaeological sites, are just one indication of some of the new and unexpected aspects that are coming to light. At present, however, ‘Antioch’ is concentrating its attention on the very large number of manuscripts of Antiochian Orthodox provenance, written in four different languages, Greek, Syriac, Christian Palestinian Aramaic and Arabic. At the end of many of these the copyist has provided a colophon with notes stating where, when and for whom the manuscript was written; quite often, further information of a historical or topographical nature is also given. Work on these manuscripts has already brought to light a forgotten saint, besides providing a lot of new and valuable historical information. Once all this information has been collected together, it will make it possible to write a much more authoritative and reliable history of the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch than is at present available.

At the present time ‘Antioch’ is supporting the research of Monk Elia Khalifeh, an Orthodox monk from Lebanon who is currently residing in Oxford, where he is able to benefit from the resources of the University’s libraries, above all from its manuscripts and its collection of microfilms from St Catherine’s Monastery, Sinai. He has already made an inventory of several thousand manuscripts in Syriac, Christian Palestinian Aramaic and Arabic, and is in the process of entering all the varied information contained in their colophons into a carefully designed data base. The aim of ‘Antioch’ is eventually to be able to make all this information available to scholars in the form of a fully searchable database, as well as to support and publish research on the Antiochian Orthodox heritage in general. In due course it is hoped that it will also be possible to organize conferences on the Antiochian Orthodox tradition, and, ideally, to establish a physical Centre to further promote research and to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge about this neglected and little-known tradition to a wider public.

Needless to say, the future success and development of ‘Antioch’ depends on financial support for its work. Further information about ‘Antioch’ in general, and about how to support it, can be found on its website, [www.AntiochCentre.net](http://www.AntiochCentre.net).