



Beirut, February 16, 2004

The Very Reverend John P. Abdalah
Editor-in-Chief of: *The WORD*
magazine

Beloved Brother,

I greet you in the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

I had the opportunity to read on the Archdiocesan web-site, the February 2004 edition of *The WORD* magazine. A letter from H.E. Metropolitan Philip concerning self-rule is published on page 5. This letter refers to the "full text of the resolution of the Holy Synod," published in the November 2003 edition of *The WORD* on page 4. To my surprise, when comparing the official English version of the resolution issued by the Holy Synod to the published text, I found discrepancies, in more than one place of this "authorized English translation."

1. "Eparchial Synod" and "Local Synod":

The official English version of the Synodal Resolution speaks of an "Eparchial Synod" while the "authorized translation" published in *The WORD* calls it "Local Synod" (Paragraphs: 3, 4, 5 and 6). This last term creates ambiguity, since it is used for Churches, not for Archdioceses.

2. Election of Bishops:

The article four of the official English version of the Synodal Resolution states: "The Patriarch of Antioch shall delegate **three** Metropolitan." While the so-called authorized translation published in *The WORD* mentions: "The Patriarch of Antioch shall delegate **two or three** Metropolitan," as if the published text aimed to minimize the "weight" of the Patriarchal presence in the election process.

3. Right of appeal:

The article six of the official English version of the Synodal Resolution states: "Bishops of the Eparchial Synod have the right of appeal of its decisions to the Patriarch of Antioch who shall be the final judge along with the Holy Synod of Antioch." While the published resolution contained an additional condition, it mentions: "**In all matters of hierarchical discipline**, Bishops of the

Local Synod have the right of appeal ..."

This added condition limits to the disciplinary matters, the right of Bishops to appeal. In fact, the Bishops, according to the Synod Resolution, have the right to appeal any decision taken by the Eparchial Synod to the Patriarch, who shall be the final judge along with the Holy Synod of Antioch.

Strange enough, this additional condition was not even discussed in the Synod meetings. The Holy Synod adopted literally the text of the paragraph presented by H.E. Metropolitan Philip as it was voted by the convention of July 2003.

4. Synaxis attendance:

This same article six of the official English version of the Synodal Resolution states: "The Bishops of the Archdiocese shall attend the gatherings or synaxis of Antiochian Bishops which may be called by the Patriarch of Antioch." Here again a new condition of Bishops' attendance is inserted. The published text mentions: "The Archdiocesan Bishops, **after consultation with the Metropolitan**, shall attend the synaxis ..."

Printing the copy of all the Synod fathers' signatures at the bottom of this modified text gave the reader the false impression of reading the official Synodal Resolution.

The editor's note at the bottom of page 4 speaks about "**Autonomy**" while obviously this term is not used at all in the official English version of the Synodal Resolution. The Holy Synod used the term "Self-Ruled Archdiocese," because the word "Autonomy" is also

used for "Autonomous Churches." This "mistake" was made in the Editor's note, when it says: "May God grant our holy leadership many years and bless the **autonomous** Antiochian Orthodox Church in North America."

The discussions of the Holy Synod as well as the Synodal Resolution emphasized the unity of the Antiochian Church and stressed the fact that **the North American Archdiocese is and shall remain an Antiochian Archdiocese**, excluding the use of the term "Autonomous Church."

Beloved brother,

For the good sake of the Christ's flock, and to avoid any misleading interpretations, I kindly ask you to publish this explanatory note in the next issue of *The WORD* magazine.

Yours in Christ,

Father George Dimas,
Secretary of the Holy Synod of Antioch



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