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Robert A. Koory
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Dear Bob,

Thanks so much for answering my letter. You are right, it would be better to have been able to have this discussion face to face; face-to-face dialogue often helps to dispel myths and misunderstanding. As it is, though, your letter raises more questions than it answers.

You suggest that I have "ulterior motives". My only motives ever have been love of the church, including the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, which is my home, and the integrity of the relationship between the North American archdiocese and its mother church. I speak only for myself and am not aware of anyone who advocates, "reversing the decision of the Holy Synod". In fact, my intention is to urge that the North American archdiocese honor and comply with the decision of the Holy Synod of Antioch, as the Holy Synod rendered it. It is the action proposed by the "Department of Legal Affairs" that would undermine implementation of that decision. Counting myself among those who welcomed reading the news in the Word magazine that the Holy Synod of Antioch had finally approved an agreed upon constitution for North America, I was stunned to read in January that the Department of Legal Affairs was attempting to reverse all that had been achieved by advocating a course of action that would reject the authority of the Holy Synod.

Your letter refers to "numerous errors, false assumptions and misunderstandings" but names not one. It is a fact that the 2003 Resolution of the Holy Synod required that the North American archdiocese amend its constitution and submit that amended constitution "for approval." Requiring approval includes the possibility that the document would not be approved as it was submitted, but would need adjustment. This is what happened. It is a fact that the Holy Synod received the document passed in July and submitted to the October 2004 meeting of the Holy Synod attended by His Eminence Metropolitan Philip, but did not approve it exactly as it was drafted; instead the Holy Synod approved a version that took almost all of that good and thoughtful version passed in July and corrected parts of it that did not reflect the actual provisions of the October 2003 resolution that spelled out the required provisions that defined the nature of the self-rule that was granted. It is a fact that in October 2004 the Holy Synod of Antioch approved, signed and sealed a constitution for North America that varies somewhat from the constitution passed in Pittsburgh in July with the result that the earlier document as it was submitted was superseded within the ecclesial context, and therefore also as legal authority, by the constitution approved by the Holy Synod.

There is no question that the version of the constitution drafted in advance of the Pittsburgh special assembly included a provision that attempted to render it immediately effective, but in fact, the process in which the North American archdiocese understood itself to be engaged at that point was following the resolution of October 2003, which vis-à-vis the Holy Synod of Antioch, still required approval of the Holy Synod for the new constitution to have effect. There are two authorities involved here, the secular authority and the ecclesial one. The archdiocese has both a temporal

institutional quality and a spiritual, ecclesial quality. As the father of a priest, you understand even better than others that the Orthodox Church is first and foremost an ecclesial, hierarchical body. While in the United States a church usually forms a legal corporation in order to function as a legal entity, this institutional character is in service to the higher, immeasurably more important ecclesial character. The State of New York may accept for filing documents that have not followed the proper ecclesial steps required by the hierarchical structure of the church; this does not give those documents ecclesial significance.

You state that at the meeting of the general assembly in Los Angeles I spoke "against self-rule". In fact, my remarks, both at the meeting of the board and from the floor of the assembly, were not "against self-rule" but expressed concern that the process being engaged by the North American archdiocese was unnecessarily aggressive and potentially antagonistic. Regrettably, this has proven to be the case. Board minutes will show that I voted "for" placing the proposal on the agenda of the Los Angeles assembly, after receiving assurances that the process would be undertaken in a spirit of respectful dialogue. As it happens, I look forward to full canonical Orthodox unity in North America and considered the result of the Holy Synod in both the resolution of October 2003 as officially rendered and the document approved by the Holy Synod in October 2004 as providing an important well-reasoned transition toward that end. My motive in writing the letter of March 30 was to help to assure that no action is taken in North America as a result of misunderstanding that could effect schismatic division from the canonical Orthodox Church. My motivation is not to promote division but to help prevent it. What is not clear is what might be the motive of the Department of Legal Affairs, which I assume to be you and Charles Ajalat, in advising the faithful of the North American archdiocese to reject the decision taken by the Holy Synod of Antioch in October 2004.

Your letter is long on its personal attack on me, a solitary parishioner from New Jersey who has the temerity to raise what seem to be serious concerns, but short on actually answering the issues raised. At least you have encouraged the current trustees to ask their own questions, presumably before any irrevocable actions are taken. The question that still has not been answered is, "Why would the Department of Legal Affairs, rather, why would you and Charles, advise the North American archdiocese to reject the direct action of the Holy Synod of Antioch that approved a new constitution for the North American archdiocese, a constitution that is consistent with the provisions of the resolution of the Holy Synod of Antioch that granted self-rule, when the risk of doing so may be to effect division from the patriarchate of Antioch?" If you are sincerely hoping to assure continuity of the relationship between the patriarchate and the archdiocese, then why would you advise such a provocation considering all that has taken place: the Holy Synod has granted self-rule, consecrated new bishops and approved a restructuring of the North American archdiocese that allows dioceses and diocesan bishops to take their place alongside their peers in other jurisdictions in preparation for full Orthodox unity in North America. The spiritual legacy of the Church of Antioch is the greatest contribution we can offer as the Orthodox Christians in North America move towards unity.

Sincerely,

Anne Glynn Mackoul

Cc. H.E. Metropolitan PHILIP
Diocesan Bishops of the North American Archdiocese
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