

From Polarization to Cohabitation in the New Middle East

# From Polarization to Cohabitation in the New Middle East

Edited by  
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# Greek Orthodox Patriarch Ignatius Hazim (1979–2012) of Antioch and his Perspective on Inter-Christian and Interreligious Dialogue

Bishara Ebeid (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

## Introduction

Antioch, a divided Christianity in the milieu of Islam, has much to contribute regarding dialogue, both among Christian Churches and between Christianity and Islam. I would describe Antioch as a witness to the cross of division, awaiting the resurrection of unity. The Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch, Ignatius IV Hazim (d. 2012), is one of the most important Orthodox theologians of the last century. He was correctly characterized as a “leader of peace, dialogue and reconciliation.” He believed that dialogue is an instrument to achieve Christian unity and peaceful coexistence with Muslims. He aimed principally to re-establish unity within Antioch, having as a basis the concept of “plurality in unity.” He was also concerned about the situation of the Christian world at large, and for this reason, was an active figure in the ecumenical movement. Finally, he tried to develop dialogue between Christians and Muslims: a dialogue of love, coexistence and peace. In this paper I would like to highlight the vision of dialogue according to Ignatius IV, by analyzing his thought as expressed in lectures, conferences, kerugma and sermons staged in both the East and West.<sup>1</sup>

## Ignatius IV: A Short Biography<sup>2</sup>

Ignatius was born in 1921 in the village of Mhardey near the city of Hama in Syria. His parents named him Ḥabib. From childhood he was active in the Church and its activities; he was also attracted to liturgical celebrations. During his studies at the American University of Beirut and when he was about to complete his degree in literature, he was ordained a deacon for the diocese of Beirut and received the name Ignatius. From the 1942, with other friends, he was one of the leaders of the Orthodox Youth Movement, a Movement that renewed the life of the Church in the Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch in both Syria and Lebanon. In 1945, he was sent to Paris to study at the St. Sergius Institute. There, as he himself narrates, Ignatius came into contact with

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- 1 This contribution is based on a paper that I gave at World Religions World Church Conference organized by University of Notre Dame held in Rome, January 8–10, 2018. The thought of Ignatius IV presented here is based on some lectures, conferences and kerugma published either in Arabic and others translated into English or Italian. Unfortunately, scholars have not studied enough the important thought of Ignatius IV Hazim. In addition to the introductions of the translations into western languages of some of his lectures and speeches, there are some interesting papers that dealt with his thought in Isaac Barakat, Christos Arampatzis (eds.), *Patriarch Ignatius IV of Antioch - A Great Spiritual Leader of Peace, Dialogue and Reconciliation: Festschrift in the Honor of His Beatitude Ignatius IV (Hazim), Patriarch of Antioch and All East* (Cologne: Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All East, Archdiocese of Germany and Central Europe-University of Balamand, 2015). I hope that this paper also makes his thought known to western readers and encourage scholars to read him and study his thought.
  - 2 A more detailed biography can be found in the introduction of Ignatius IV Hazim, *The Resurrection and Modern Man* (English translation by Stephan Bigham, forward by Olivier Clement, Crestwood N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary Press, 1985), 7–19.

Orthodox theology, particularly the Orthodox Russian theological current of the Diaspora, as well as Western theologians and thinkers.<sup>3</sup> The historical and political context of the Middle East and Europe at that time was one of the challenges which directly affected his thought: the beginning of modernity and modern life, secularization, the Palestinian crisis the war in Lebanon, the rise of Marxism and finally, the rise of Islamic ideology.

Upon his return to Lebanon from Paris, he founded the Balamand seminary near the city of Tripoli, where he also became its first rector. In 1961 he became a bishop, and in 1970, the metropolitan of Lattaquié. In 1979, he was elected Patriarch on the throne of Peter and Paul of Antioch at Damascus. He was very active in the ecumenical movement, as Patriarch he was co-president of the Council of Middle Eastern Churches, he participated in the World Council of Churches, and during his Patriarchate, the Church of Antioch participated also in the commission for dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church. His particular desire, however, was the establishment of unity within the Church of Antioch and the improvement in relations between Christians and Muslims through a common language and common beliefs. He passed away on December 5, 2012, in Beirut, Lebanon.

#### **Greek Orthodox Patriarchate: Brief Historical Presentation<sup>4</sup>**

Antioch was a Greek metropolitan city bordering on Mesopotamia. It was the center of the encounter between Greek and Semitic cultures. There, the disciples of Christ and his followers were first called Christians (Act 11:26). One might characterize Antioch as a center of diversity of thoughts, philosophies, cultures, theologies and political visions. Such a diversity, that probably functioned as an encounter, was also, however, the cause of divisions starting from the beginnings of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. During the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, Antioch played an essential role in the Christological controversy, due to its theological and Christological current, represented by important figures as Diodorus of Tarsus, Theodorus of Mopsuestia, Theodoretus of Cyr, or the so-called 'School of Antioch.'<sup>5</sup> In places where diversity was no longer seen as an enrichment, the result of these controversies, that continued in the following centuries, was a deepening of the divisions between the different theological currents. In fact, at the time of the Muslim and Arab occupation of the Eastern provinces of Byzantium and the Sassanian Empire, the Christian world in Antioch was divided in three major Churches, each with independent hierarchies: 1) the Chalcedonian Church, which came to be called the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch; 2) the non-Chalcedonian Church, called the Jacobite or Syrian-Orthodox Church; and 3) the Nestorian Church, also called the Church of the East, which shared the Antiochian heritage of theology and

<sup>3</sup> See Ignatius IV Hazim, *Mawāqif wa-aqwāl* (Beirut: Balamand University Press, 2002), 51–55.

<sup>4</sup> On the history of the Patriarchate of Antioch from the first Christian centuries till our days see the following studies: John Maso Neale, *A History of the Holy Eastern Church: The Patriarchate of Antioch, Together with Memories of the Patriarchs of Antioch* (English translation and introduction by George Williams, London: Rivingtons, 1873); Abdo Antoun, *The First Patriarchates and their Divisions* (Lebanon: Notre Dame University–Louaize, 2010); Glanville Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961).

<sup>5</sup> On this school and its thought see the following studies: D.S. Wallace-Hadrill, *Christian Antioch. A study of early Christian thought in the East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Vahan S. Hovhannessian (ed.), *The School of Antioch. Biblical Theology and the Church in Syria* (New York: Peter Lang, 2016).

exegesis.<sup>6</sup> One might also include the Maronite Church, a branch from the Chalcedonian Syriac Church which probably during the reign of Heraclius adopted the doctrine of Monothelism and Monoenergism, and then continued under its own hierarchy, that adopted aspects of Roman Catholicism in the period of the Crusades and remained united to the Rome.<sup>7</sup>

In the years following the Arabic and Islamic occupation, the Chalcedonian Patriarchate of Antioch adopted Arabic as the language of liturgy and theology. After the Mongol invasion and the destruction of the city of Antioch, precisely in 1322, the See of the Patriarchate was transferred to Damascus, where it still is today. From the beginning of the Islamic occupation until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Christians living under Islamic rule and law, were considered as *ḍimmah*, protected communities. People from other religions, such as the Jews, also belonged to this category. Members from these communities had to pay a tax called *ḡizyah* in order to be protected by the Islamic Army and to receive a kind of religious tolerance.<sup>8</sup> *Ḍimmah* status, and other reasons such as economic, politic and religious ones, caused the phenomenon of Christians converting to Islam, and as a result a quick Islamization of the area took place in different ways.

Although the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch at the time of the schism of 1054 had a policy of reconciliation, at the end, and because of different circumstances, the schism became a reality in the Orthodox Church of Antioch. Along with the Syriac-Orthodox Church and the Church of the East, the Greek Orthodox Christians of Antioch had to face and suffer the Roman policy of uniatism,<sup>9</sup> from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The consequence of such a policy was more divisions among the Christians of Antioch, giving rise to other Churches which were united with Rome: the Melkite Church, as a result of a division within the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate, the Syriac-Catholic Church, as a result of a division within the Syriac-Orthodox Church, and the Chaldean Church, a result of a division within the Church of the East. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century further divisions occurred, caused by the missionaries of Latin-Catholic, Anglican and Protestant Churches.<sup>10</sup> Today, the Christianity in Antioch is a mosaic of different divided Churches. Given this history, I would state, once again, that Antioch is a Church that suffers the cross of division and is still awaiting the resurrection of unity.

6 On the Churches under Islam see the following: Sidney Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque. Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008); Bishara Ebeid, *La Tunica di al-Masih. La cristologia delle grandi confessioni cristiane dell'Oriente nel X e XI secolo* (Rome: Edizioni Orientalia Christiana-Valore Italiano, 2019<sup>2</sup>), 54–81; Andrea Pacini (ed.), *Comunità cristiane nell'Islam arabo. La sfida del futuro*, (Torino: Edizioni Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, 1996).

7 On the history of the Maronite Church and its rapport with Rome see the following: Matti Moosa, *The Maronites in History*, (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1986); Antoine Khoury Harb, *The Maronites. History and constants*, (Beirut: The Maronite Heritage, 2001).

8 On *ḍimmitude* system in Islam see: Arthur Stanley Tritton, *The Caliphs and Their Non-Muslim Subjects. A Critical Study of the Covenant of 'Umar* (London: Routledge, 2008); Samir Khalil Samir, "Le comunità cristiane, soggetti attivi della società araba nel corso della storia," in Andrea Pacini, (ed.), *Comunità cristiane nell'Islam arabo. La sfida del futuro*, 75–100.

9 Uniatism is the a religious policy followed by the Roman Church to achieve the union with Eastern Churches according to which Eastern Churches accept the catholic doctrine and the authority of the papacy without losing their proper Eastern Rite or their own government by local Patriarchs and synods, for more details see Taras Khomych, "Eastern Catholic Churches and the Question of 'Uniatism'. Problems of the Past, Challenges of the Present and Hopes for the Future," *Louvain Studies* Vol. 31, Issue 3 (2006), 214–237.

10 See Peter Pikkert, *Protestant Missions in the Middle East: Ambassadors to Christ or Culture?* (Hamilton, ON: WEC Canada, 2008).



### Ignatius IV and Dialogue

Reading the thought of Ignatius, both before and after his consecration as a Patriarch, one easily notes why he was called a man of dialogue. Dialogue for him is a natural consequence of being Christian, believing in the Holy Trinity and in the Incarnation of the Logos. Ignatius even gives a definition of what dialogue means for him<sup>11</sup>: 1) listening with *amorous* attention and a total respect towards others, including all people; 2) loving others, according to Christian love whose model is God Himself, who exists in a communion of Love (the inter-Trinitarian relation), and who, out of great of Love, saved the world through the economy of salvation; 3) praying to God and thanking Him for the abundance of the divine gifts he gives us; and finally, 4) entrusting ourselves to God, trusting Him, and asking for His help when one faces problems and obstacles in the act of dialogue. For Ignatius, then, dialogue can be described in three words: listening, loving and praying.

It is clear that Ignatius is aware of how difficult dialogue is, but for him, being Christian means being involved in dialogue. Christian faith is based on the union between divinity and humanity, having as its model the union in Christ in its Chalcedonian expression. Such faith must be open, at the same time, to all the explorations of both humanity and divinity; and humanity and divinity must always be in union, without division or confusion. Ignatius, according to such an affirmation, is a true Chalcedonian theologian, who contemplates the mystery of Christ as “God-Man” in all the dimensions of life. In ‘Man’, in fact, he sees all humanity, its cultures, history, sciences, thoughts and religions. In addition, this ‘man’ is in union with ‘God’; this union leads ‘God’ to be in communion with the other, that is, with ‘Man’ the microcosm of the macrocosm. From a Christian and specifically from a Chalcedonian point of view, to be in dialogue and in a communion of love with others and with God, must be according to the model of the “Uni-Trinity” (which is the way Ignatius calls the relation between the three persons of God) and the model of the co-existence of the divinity and humanity in Christ. Dialogue, in this case, becomes the encounter of diversity, co-existence in the communion of Love that leads to “unity in diversity”.<sup>12</sup>

### Ignatius IV and the other Christian Churches

Having this theological perspective and these characteristics regarding dialogue in mind, one might wonder how such thought led Ignatius to develop his vision on the dialogue between different Christians and on the desired union among them. It is a known fact that the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch is very active in the ecumenical movement.<sup>13</sup> On various occasions Ignatius has expressed his opinion on dialogue between Christians and has proposed some solutions for the problems and challenges inter-Christian dialogue faces, particularly concerning doctrinal issues. Unity must be based on truth and not on emotions or personal relationships, therefore, one must acknowledge and confess with honesty, the mistakes of the past and be committed to work hard so that the future may be free from the limits of history.<sup>14</sup> Division among Christians, according to Ignatius, demonstrates that sin has replaced love in historical

11 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *L'arte del dialogo: con la creazione, gli uomini, le chiese* (Italian translation by Laura Marino, preface by Enzo Bianchi, Magnano: Edizioni Qiqajon, 2004), 114–115.

12 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *L'arte del dialogo*, 119–122.

13 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *L'arte del dialogo*, 141–142.

14 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *Mawāqif wa-aqwāl*, 73.

Christendom. Unity is the remedy that must put Love back again in its place and remove the sin of hate. The Church must put on the image of unity, otherwise it would be considered an enemy of Christ himself. Division, in fact, has caused lots of Christians to abandon the Church and to embrace atheism instead of Christianity.<sup>15</sup>

Lastly, for Ignatius, dialogue between Churches and Christians must have an eschatological dimension. Christians, according to such a dimension, should not stop with history and the sins of the past; they must look towards the future seeking to have a real vision of unity.<sup>16</sup> All this explains how important dialogue was for Ignatius IV of Antioch.

### **Dialogue with Non-Chalcedonians**

The dialogue between Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian Churches reached the conclusion that between the two Christological doctrines there is no real difference. According to the achieved agreements non-Chalcedonians can accept the seven ecumenical councils of the Chalcedonian Church, especially Chalcedon and its doctrine (along with a few conditions), while the Chalcedonians can accept as orthodox the Christological expression “one nature of the divine Logos from two natures.”<sup>17</sup> A real Eucharistic union, however, has not yet been reached. When Ignatius was consecrated Patriarch, this Christological accord was already in place, and Churches, at that time were looking at how to make the following step, i.e. the Eucharistic union. Even in his enthronement speech, Ignatius highlighted that his interest would be to promote dialogue between Churches, but especially to work hard so that a unity with non-Chalcedonians might be reached, since both Churches share the same tradition, faith, and apostolic roots.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, this Eucharistic unity has still not been accomplished. In 1991, however, Ignatius IV signed a declaration with the Patriarch of the Syriac Orthodox Church, Ignatius Zakka I, according to which members from both Churches could receive Eucharist in the other Church when difficulty to celebrate the Eucharist is presented in the proper Church in a specific time and place.<sup>19</sup>

### **Dialogue in Ecumenical Movement (WCC and Protestant Churches)**

Ignatius was a co-president of the WCC.<sup>20</sup> He himself considered the WCC and CCME as instruments in service of the unity of Christians, as a forum for dialogue, and in service of society and humanity.<sup>21</sup> Ecumenical initiatives, according to Patriarch Ignatius, has helped some Churches to discover their identity, since encountering the other leads perfectly to self-discovery.<sup>22</sup> Love is the way that leads the Churches to have an exchange of experiences; Orthodoxy can offer

15 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *Mawāqif wa-aqwāl*, 83–84, 86.

16 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *L'arte del dialogo*, 28–29.

17 Regarding the dialogue between Chalcedonian Orthodox and Non-Chalcedonian Churches see Christine Chaillot, Alexander Belopopsky (eds.), *Towards Unity. The Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches*, (Geneva: Inter-Orthodox Dialogue, 1998).

18 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *Mawāqif wa-aqwāl*, 19.

19 See <https://orthodoxjointcommission.wordpress.com/2014/06/27/statement-of-the-orthodox-church-of-antioch-on-the-relationships-between-the-eastern-and-syrian-orthodox-churches/> (last access July 23, 2019).

20 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *Mawāqif wa-aqwāl*, 45.

21 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *Mawāqif wa-aqwāl*, 36.

22 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *Mawāqif wa-aqwāl*, 45.

a lot, he affirms, to the Ecumenical Movement, and also Western Churches have a lot to offer to Orthodoxy.<sup>23</sup>

However, Ignatius makes some distinctions; He rejects any doctrine that separates spirituality from dogma;<sup>24</sup> he also refuses the idea of unity, supported by some Protestant Churches, that consider all Churches equal, and that all Churches are parts or branches of the present Christianity. In fact, following the traditional Orthodox opinion, he considers the Orthodox Church as the 'One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church', without considering the other Churches estranged from this reality. He indeed affirms that there is 'One Church' with 'one doctrine'; it is the 'Apostolic Church' and its continuity in history is the Orthodox Church.<sup>25</sup> Orthodoxy, however, has a mission today, and it is not to call all other Churches to return to this 'One Church'; this ideology of return is strongly rejected by Ignatius. For him, since Orthodoxy has conserved the Apostolic doctrine and tradition without alteration, it must help, in humility and love, other Churches to go towards the Only One who can accomplish the unity of His Church: Jesus Christ, the Lord.<sup>26</sup>

### Dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church

Ignatius is aware that the schism between East and West occurred in 1054 was the worst tragedy in the history of Christianity. The consequences of this schism were very painful for the East, which suffered a lot from the Religious Policy of the Latin Church. It was the behaviour of Roman Catholics before the Eastern Christians who made dialogue hard and sometimes impossible. He affirms that Latins, firstly during the Crusades, ignored the presence of Eastern Christians in the East. The policy of uniatism and the behaviour of the missionaries in the last two centuries were also problematic for the Eastern Churches. Missionaries, according to Ignatius, even if received with the hope of closeness between Churches, continued their policy of proselytism.<sup>27</sup> The result in Antioch, on a local level, was the existence of, at least, five different and independent Churches. Ignatius describes this history with the expression 'history of dolorous love'. Recently, however, things have begun to change. The Church of Rome demonstrated respect towards the Eastern Churches, recognized them as Churches, and has ceased its policy of proselytism and uniatism. It is clear, Ignatius affirms, that 'love' is coming back to retake its place among the Churches. This is also clear, he affirms, from the moment when the Church of Rome started to talk about 'primacy of love and charity'.

It is known that the schism of 1054 was also caused by doctrinal issues. Ignatius affirms that if divine love finds its way between the Churches, i.e. love without limits, all problems can be resolved. In addition, he proposes how to overcome the main theological and doctrinal problems. Regarding the *filioque*, which is considered the most important difference between West and East, he says that it should be resolved by considering it not as a dogma, but as a *theologoumenon*, i.e. a theological opinion. In this case, it would not be imposed as an obligatory teaching on all Churches. In addition, the primacy of the Bishop of Rome, another problem between West and East, is to be considered as the primacy of love and charity;<sup>28</sup> its canonical weight should be

23 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *Mawāqif wa-aqwāl*, 48.

24 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *Mawāqif wa-aqwāl*, 45.

25 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *Mawāqif wa-aqwāl*, 87–88, 96.

26 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *Mawāqif wa-aqwāl*, 97.

27 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *L'arte del dialogo*, 180.

28 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *Mawāqif wa-aqwāl*, 69; Ignatius IV Hazim, *L'arte del dialogo*, 181.

understood as a living reality animated by the Holy Spirit. As such, primacy becomes a service towards the other Churches. The faith of the Church must be based on the doctrine of the seventh Ecumenical Councils. While, in this last consideration, Ignatius is not original, but follows the traditional opinion of the Orthodox Church, he supports his opinion referring to the doctrine of Pope Paul VI who distinguishes the Councils of the Catholic Church, i.e. the Ecumenical Seven Councils, from the rest of the Councils, considering them as general Councils.<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, all doctrines developed in the separated Churches should be considered *theologoumena*, i.e. doctrines without ecumenical (universal) recognition. If the Patriarch of Antioch asks the Roman Church to consider the *filioque* as a *theologoumenon*, he himself says that the Orthodox Church should consider the doctrine of the *Palamite* synods as *theologoumenon* as well, since these synods were general and not ecumenical. Ignatius, in addition, underlines that Churches must discover, in true, love and *metanoia*, what they did to each other in the past, so they can clearly see the treasures they may share together, and so that the message of unity can be demonstrated stronger. Love and *metanoia* permit Churches to distinguish what is important to discuss, separating the essential issues from those of secondary importance, which should not constitute the reasons for disagreement or obstacles to unity. Finally, as a theologian of Eucharistic Ecclesiology, the Patriarch of Antioch highlights the importance of synodality in the life of Church. All problems, disagreements and misunderstandings must be discussed and resolved in a synodal way.

#### **Dialogue within the Antiochian Churches**

One of the most painful consequences of the schism of 1054 was the creation of the Eastern Catholic Churches in the East. Ignatius always affirms this fact in his writings. The existence of the Eastern Catholic Churches was a main obstacle to have, in the past, a real dialogue with Rome. Now, however, when the same Eastern Catholic Churches have been discovering their roots and when they are not in antagonism with the Orthodox Churches, the relationship among all Churches in the East started to change. Ignatius, highlighting once again the importance of synodality, affirms that if in Antioch every problem was discussed and resolved in a synod, the same Patriarchal See would not be divided into such a number of local Churches. The social and political situation of all Christians in the Middle East, the formation of mixed families, who all share the same destiny in the world of Islam, make it necessary that these Churches begin to collaborate together at a local level. He calls this collaboration a 'communion in charity'. Such collaboration, which functions on a pastoral level, should help to produce, for example, the same educational material for teaching religion in public and private (Christian) schools. Such a step, for Patriarch Ignatius, is very important in bringing the one Church nearer to the other.<sup>30</sup>

For Ignatius, in addition, the Antiochian Churches could really be united again, since there are no fundamental problems or differences between them. Dialogue and research have helped all Antiochian Churches to discover their common roots and faith. Synodality could again be a key for resolving the schism on a local level. Although he is certain that convoking a synod for all Antiochian bishops could bring about a unity in faith, Ignatius is aware that these Antiochian Churches are in communion with other Churches: the Greek Orthodox Church with the other Orthodox Churches; the Eastern Catholic Churches and the Latin communities with the Roman Church, the Syriac Orthodox with the Coptic and Armenian Churches, etc. This means, as a

<sup>29</sup> See Ignatius IV Hazim, *L'arte del dialogo*, 199–200.

<sup>30</sup> See Ignatius IV Hazim, *Mawāqif wa-aqwāl*, 35.

consequence, that unity in Antioch depends on universal unity: the schism, then, must first be resolved universally.

While this universal unity is the priority, Ignatius sees that the communion of charity and collaboration between the Antiochian Churches would help the relation between all Churches on a universal level. In fact, they ought not wait in silence for unity at a universal level, because their vocation is: 1) to establish among themselves a communion in charity based on trust, respect and love; 2) to establish in depth the Antiochian unity on the basis of local Ecclesiology, starting from the elements that do not depend on a solution at a universal level; 3) to remain the Church of the Arabs that is able to have creative positions regarding the problems of modernity in the Arabic world.<sup>31</sup> Such a local unity would offer an essential contribution to the universal dialogue among Churches.

#### **Ignatius IV and Interreligious Dialogue**

Ignatius uses the same principles of dialogue for the dialogue between religions and cultures. God created all things and therefore, whoever believes in God the Creator, must not ignore His creation but be in dialogue with it.<sup>32</sup> No one can ignore the existence of the other, the different; religions must be careful not to fall into the sin of considering themselves as the 'chosen people of God', a mentality that results in maintaining a wall separating themselves from other religions and people.<sup>33</sup> Ignatius underlines the importance of the peaceful relationship between religions and all those who believe in humanity. Such a relationship must have as its finality a vision that includes humankind and the whole world. He, moreover, considers this relationship and collaboration as a spiritual elevation.<sup>34</sup> Dialogue with different religions implies some conditions: whoever wants to take part must be faithful himself, since through truth and authentic faith many common points would be discovered so that we may share them as a common heritage and background.<sup>35</sup>

From a Christian perspective, the concept of encounter is the most important instrument of dialogue; God, to rebuild the relation and dialogue with humankind, chose to be incarnated and to encounter humans.<sup>36</sup> Christians, then, must follow the example of Christ and go and encounter the others and be in dialogue with them. As Christians, they cannot be isolated from others with whom they live. Encountering other implies feeling love and respect towards them; this, consequently means recognizing their existence and their diversity.<sup>37</sup> To recognize the existence of others is the first condition of dialogue. From a Christian point of view, such recognition is based on the fact that others are also God's creation.<sup>38</sup>

On a local level, dialogue with Judaism is essential, especially since Judaism is very close to the Semitic Christian roots of Christianity in Antioch. Dialogue, however, must be built on justice and love, and since the situation in the Middle East is full of tensions due to the creation of the state of Israel, in this case, dialogue with Judaism is impossible.<sup>39</sup>

31 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *L'arte del dialogo*, 165.

32 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *Mawāqif wa-aqwāl*, 102.

33 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *Mawāqif wa-aqwāl*, 103.

34 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *Mawāqif wa-aqwāl*, 47.

35 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *Mawāqif wa-aqwāl*, 102.

36 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *Mawāqif wa-aqwāl*, 105.

37 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *Mawāqif wa-aqwāl*, 106.

38 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *Mawāqif wa-aqwāl*, 106.

39 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *Mawāqif wa-aqwāl*, 104–105, 111–126.

For Ignatius, then, dialogue with Islam has a major importance. He, in fact, has highlighted the importance of the dialogue with Islam on various occasions. For him, Christianity in the Middle East, that has endured for centuries in an Islamic and Arabic world, has already learned how to be in dialogue with this religion, even if the relation after the encounter of the first centuries has changed into hate and enmity.<sup>40</sup> For him, the general context of the Church of Antioch obliges it to be the 'Church of the Arabs'. It was noted above that one of the elements of the unity between the Churches of Antioch is to be and to remain the 'Church of the Arabs', since all of them live and share the same conditions. The 'Church of the Arabs' does not mean simply to translate the sacred texts into Arabic. Rather, it includes changes that already happened since the first encounter between Christianity and Islam; that is, such a Church must know how to speak to the Arabic mind and how to be integrated into the Arabic culture.<sup>41</sup> In other words, it must 'make Christ Arabic' and also make Him known in the Arabic and Islamic culture. This helps both Christians and Muslims to feel like equal citizens of the same land and culture. This was the goal of those Christians who started the *al-nabḍāb*, the Arabic cultural renaissance.<sup>42</sup> Ignatius wishes that Christians in the Middle East would continue to give their Christian testimony by sharing the Love of Christ and His moral teachings with Muslims and other believers.<sup>43</sup> Christianity in Antioch can continue its mission among the Muslims of the area simply by existence as the 'Church of the Arabs' as understood by Ignatius.<sup>44</sup>

### Conclusion

Whoever reads Ignatius IV can understand why he was characterized as a man of dialogue. Dialogue had a major place in his thought and in his actions. His vision of dialogue is based on his faith and the Christian Chalcedonian doctrine he followed. Authentic Christianity is one that proclaims true love, which is the *Eros* that allows the encounter with persons as persons.<sup>45</sup> His theological thought is a mix between traditional Orthodox Patristic thought and modern Orthodox doctrine from the Russian school of the Diaspora. Personalism and Eucharistic theology, fruits of his studies at saint Serge in Paris,<sup>46</sup> are at the heart of his doctrine. In fact, the Incarnation and the Eucharist are the two elements that permit the Christian to be open towards humanity and all creation so they can be transformed and divinized.<sup>47</sup> It is in the Church that this transformation and divinization occur.<sup>48</sup> One might call the Church the 'culture of the

40 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *Mawāqif wa-aqwāl*, 103; Ignatius IV Hazim, *L'arte del dialogo*, 109–110.

41 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *Mawāqif wa-aqwāl*, 103.

42 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *L'arte del dialogo*, 110–111. On the *Nabḍāb* see Ernest Dawn, "From Ottomanism to Arabism: The Origins of an Ideology," in Albert Hourani, Philip Khoury, Mary C. Wilson (eds.), *The Modern Middle East: A Reader* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 375–394; Albert Hourani, "Middle Eastern Nationalism Yesterday and Today," in Albert Hourani (ed.), *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), 179–192.

43 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *Mawāqif wa-aqwāl*, 116.

44 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *L'arte del dialogo*, 200.

45 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *L'arte del dialogo*, 27.

46 On the thought of some theologians of Saint Serge of Paris see Aidan Nichols, *Theology in the Russian Diaspora. Church, Fathers, Eucharist in Nikolai Afanas'ev (1893–1966)* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Paul L. Gavrilyuk, *Georges Florovsky and the Russian Religious Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

47 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *L'arte del dialogo*, 67.

48 See Ignatius IV Hazim, *L'arte del dialogo*, 69.

Incarnation' that accepts all without distinction. In this culture, anthropology follows the Christological model, i.e. human being has Christ himself as model.<sup>49</sup> According to such anthropology, men and women must accept all; they must be united with all, in communion and dialogue. In this way we can characterize this culture as the one of encounter and dialogue; more precisely, as the culture of the communion of the love, according to the communion in the Holy and Divine Trinity, called by Ignatius "Uni-Trinity", and of the communion of diversity in unity, according to the communion between the divinity and humanity in Christ. This culture, i.e. the Church, must be in service of *agape* towards all and for all.<sup>50</sup> In conclusion, we can affirm that for Ignatius the Church exists not for itself but for the world and for the sake of all humankind, and from this perspective he justifies the importance of dialogue as a natural function of the Church.

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<sup>49</sup> See Ignatius IV Hazim, *L'arte del dialogo*, 113.

<sup>50</sup> See Ignatius IV Hazim, *L'arte del dialogo*, 27.