CHAPTER 5 | Maronite Catholics, Orthodox Christians, and Sunni Muslims from the Arab Region

Between Empire, Racialization, and Assimilation

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THIS CHAPTER IS BASED upon ethnographic research among Sunni Muslims in California and Maronite and Orthodox Christians in Michigan. All our interlocutors are from Arabic-speaking countries.[1] Their articulations of Christianity and Islam entail notions of religious identity that primarily refer to the domain of the divine or a sense of spirituality that transcends the boundaries of historical and political realities. At the same time, they articulate religious identity and their relationship to scriptures in ways that are entangled in a range of historical realities including: (a) the transnational social and cultural fields, or the networks of social relationships that link Arab immigrant communities in the United States to their homeland;[2] (b) US-led wars and other projects in the Arab region; (c) the related internal histories and politics of their nations of origin; and (d) the pressures of anti-Arab racism, immigration, and assimilation in the United States. Our report illustrates how, for the diaspora communities from the Arab region that are the focus of our study, religious and scriptural concepts and practices are entangled in historical and material realities that are transnational in scope.

Our research shows that our interlocutors articulate religious identity and practices through multiple attachments that both accommodate and transgress the geographic boundaries of the United States. The concept of diaspora helps explain connections to a prior home that are so strong that they inspire a resistance to erasure or assimilation that are stronger

than the sort of difference implied by the term "ethnic" (Clifford 1996). Our research is guided by theorizations that explain diaspora in terms of an "entanglement" or "intertwining of the genealogies of dispersion with those of 'staying put' " or the sense that "diasporic communities are organized around different modalities of power that are inserted into prevailing modalities of power" (Brah 1996). Diaspora connotes a sense of being a people "with historical roots and destinies outside the time/space of the host nation." It implies a constant mediation, lived tensions, and the experience of living separately from the homeland while remaining entangled with it "over here." It entails living "over here" while remembering or desiring another place (Clifford 1996).[3]

Here, our interlocutors' entanglement in US modalities of power entails engaging with US discourses and practices related to the war on terror, which lumps a diverse spectrum of people from a range of nations and religious groups into the category "Middle Eastern, Arab, Muslim" enemy. Many interlocutors contend with these discourses and practices as they articulate their religious beliefs and practices and engage with scriptures. Yet we are cautious not to reduce our interlocutors' engagements with religion and scriptures to an engagement with geopolitics related to the particular relationship between Arab nations; US economic, military, and political projects in the Arab region; and the racialization of Arabs and Muslims in the United States. For some interlocutors, their articulations of religion and their relationship to scriptures hailed them into communities they perceived to be global—that transcend the boundaries of nation or racial/ethnic categories. More importantly, as practicing Christians and Muslims, our interlocutors are deeply rooted in spirituality and a relationship to the divine in ways that cannot be explained or rationalized through socio-historical or worldly analytical frameworks. This is why our project highlights the significance of nation-states, cultural identity and geo-politics to scriptural engagements among our interlocutors while it also shows how religious and scriptural practices and beliefs extend beyond a historical, cultural, or political domain.

How does the community name itself and how has it been named by others? How has this naming and self-naming changed over time? What are its origins in the United States?

Since 1945, nations for which the primary language is Arabic have combined to form the Arab league and the members of the Arab league are considered the Arab nations, including Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar,

Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. Although US popular cultural representations often conflate the categories "Arab" and "Muslim," not all Arabs are Muslim and not all Muslims are Arabs. The top six countries with the largest Muslim population are Indonesia (202.9 million), Pakistan (174 million), India (160 million), Bangladesh (145 million), Egypt (78.5 million), and Nigeria (78 million).[4] Only one of these countries is Arab. Arab countries include a diversity of linguistic, ethnic, and religious groups. Religious groups include, but are not limited to Christians, Jews, and Druze. Non-Arab ethnic minorities include, but are not limited to, Kurds, Amazighs, and Armenians.

Ever since the late 1880s when the first significant group of Arab immigrants came to the United States, the terms of Arab identity among government officials and among Arab immigrant communities have been contested and shifting.[5] The first significant group of immigrants was from the Ottoman provinces of Syria, Mount Lebanon, and Palestine. Scholars have tended to study Arab immigration to the United States in two periods, pre- and post-World War II (WWII), and have argued that the first large influx of Arab immigrants was predominantly Christians from Mount Lebanon and came from Greater Syria at the turn of the twentieth century (Naff 1985; Suleiman 1999; Shakir 1997; Aswad 1974; Elkholy 1969). In this literature, a general consensus is that early migrants came to the United States out of economic necessity and for personal advancement. Post-WWII immigration and displacement to the United States was more diverse than in the early years. Immigrants came from nearly every Arabic-speaking country and included nearly equal numbers of Christians and Muslims (Suleiman 1999, 9). While early Arab immigrants were primarily Christian and from Greater Syria, post-WWII immigrants have included Arabs from Gulf States and from North Africa as well as a greater number of Muslim immigrants, adding a greater variation in appearance and skin color, cultural patterns, and religious groupings, including a greater number of Muslims than had previously come to the United States from the Arab region. Post-WWII immigrants and refugees have also been more diverse in terms of socio-economic class. Moreover, post-WWII immigration has included more individuals and communities who have come to the United States due to displacement by war, colonialism, neocolonialism and imperialism than before.[6] Increasing US economic and military intervention in the Arab region since World War II has underscored a deepening continuity between US-led war in the Arab region, processes of immigration and displacement from the Arab region

to the United States, and the escalating targeting of Arab immigrants and Arab Americans.

Several scholars have explored representations of "the Arab" in terms of what Edward Said referred to as "Orientalism," or the colonialist academic, political, and literary discourses on Arabs, Islam, and the Middle East originating in England and France and later in the United States (1978).[7] An analysis of the historical fascination with the Holy Land in US popular discourses is critical to understanding representations of the "Arab" in US popular culture (Little 2002; McAlister 2005). The Puritan fascination with the Holy Land entailed a profound ambivalence about what dominant US discourses referred to as " 'infidels'—mostly Muslims but some Jews" (Little 2002, 9). This fascination has permeated US popular imagination ever since the early days of European colonization in the United States four centuries ago in which representations of Native Americans paralleled representations of Muslims and Jews (Little 2002, 9; Rana, forthcoming). Between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries repeated imagery portraying Islam as a wicked and barbarous religion permeated US popular culture (Little 2002; McAlister 2005; Edwards 2000, 16). In the early twentieth century, the "Orient" was increasingly represented in terms of sexualized imagery in US popular culture (Shohat and Stam 1994; Steet 2000; Little 2002).

Racialized US government practices have also shaped the ways Arabs have named themselves in the United States. Most early Arab immigrants were Christian. Overall, "while the credibility of whiteness was periodically called into question by government authorities and public opinion," on the other hand, Arab American proximity to whiteness facilitated efforts to qualify for citizenship (Gualtieri 2009). The post–World War II period in which the meaning of "race" shifted in the United States was also a period of growing anti-Arab sentiment coupled with an escalation in pan-ethnic Arab American political activism. Anti-Arab racism can be explained in the context of US histories of immigrant exclusion (i.e., the history of Asian exclusion, anti-Mexican racism, and Japanese internment) in which the racialization of particular immigrants as different and inferior to whites has relied upon the notion that "they" are intrinsically inassimilable and potentially threatening to national security (Naber 2006). Since World War II, the proliferation of anti-Arab government policies and perceptions of "the Arab" as Other within US popular culture has coincided with the increasing significance of oil as a commodity to the global economy and the United States' expanding interest in military and economic intervention in the Middle East. US geopolitical interests in the

Arab region set the stage for the 1970s US-Arab oil wars that contributed to the production of the image of the "greedy Arab oil sheiks" within the United States and the strengthening of the United States' alliance with Israel in geopolitics. At the same time, the United States was embroiled in a conflict with Arab nationalists over its growing support for the state of Israel. The 1967 Arab-Israeli war signified a turning point in the impact of US involvement in the Arab region on Arab diasporas in the United States. The 1967 war marked the United States' confirmed alliance with Israel as well as an intensification of US military, political, and economic intervention in the Arab region, anti-Arab media representations, and anti-Arab discrimination and harassment within the United States. It also marked the intensification of representations of Islam as a signifier of evilness and Otherness, which was exacerbated in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution, when hegemonic discourses on the "Arab Other" in the United States increasingly deployed the assumption that all Arabs are Muslim and that Islam is an inherently backward and uncivilized religion.[8] As "Islam" gained an increasingly global appeal as a framework for expressing political sentiments, US government policies increasingly targeted individuals who were associated with a constructed "Arab Muslim" enemy.

As Naber (2008) has argued elsewhere, the 1960s and 1970s (particularly the aftermath of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war) inspired among Arabs and Arab Americans the sense that the state and media had waged a war against them. Arab American activists and scholars responded by establishing several Arab American organizations, many that were pan-ethnic in character, such as: the Organization of Arab Students in 1967, the Arab American University Graduates (1968), and the National Association of Arab Americans.[9] This pan-Arab American activism emerged within a broader context of the civil rights movement and third-world liberation movements (Naber 2008). Between the 1970s and 1990s, coupled with an increasing convergence between US and Israeli policy, several events facilitated the expansion of US control in the Arab region, including the 1970s US-Arab oil wars, the 1980s Iranian Revolution, US intervention in Lebanon in 1982, the US bombing of Libya in 1986, the 1990s Gulf War, the US bombing of Sudan and Afghanistan in 1998, and the United States' continued support of Israel and bombing of Iraq.[10] US political, military, and economic expansion in the region paralleled a rise in the institutionalization of government policies and law enforcement that specifically targeted Arabs and Arab Americans.[11] Since the 1970s, the corporate media has increasingly portrayed persons associated with the category "Arab/Middle Eastern/Muslim" as not only culturally backward,

uncivilized, exotic, or potentially dangerous, but also as potential enemies of the United States. The 1980s and 1990s brought an intensification of images of Arab terrorists.[12]

The aftermath of the 9/11 attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center consolidated the conflation of the categories Arab, Middle Eastern, and Muslim and the notion of an Arab/Middle Eastern/Muslim enemy of the nation (Volpp 2003). According to Louise Cainkar, "the U.S. government's domestic legislative, administrative, and judicial measures implemented after 9/11 have included mass arrests, secret and indefinite detentions, prolonged detention of "material witnesses," closed hearings and use of secret evidence, government eavesdropping on attorney-client conversations, FBI home and work visits, wiretapping, seizures of property, removals of aliens with technical visa violations, and mandatory special registration" (2003). Cainkar adds that "at least 100,000 Arabs and Muslims living in the United States have personally experienced one of these measures" and that "[of] thirty-seven known US government security initiatives . . . twenty-five either explicitly or implicitly target Arabs and Muslims in the United States" (Cainkar 2003). Federal government discourses have rendered men perceived to be Arab/Middle Eastern/Muslim (and/or South Asian) as "potential terrorists" and justified US-led war on Afghanistan and Iraq by purporting that Arab/Middle Eastern/Muslim women need to be saved from a backward and uncivilized culture and/or religion.

Immigration policies related to 9/11 targeted not only Muslims but also a range of people who fit the amorphous characterizations of a "terrorist profile" through FBI investigations and spying, and Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) raids, detentions, deportations, and interrogations of community organizations and activists. The INS, for example, targeted noncitizens from Muslim majority countries as well as some individuals from Muslim majority countries who were naturalized. Paralleling federal government policies, day-to-day forms of harassment, violence, and intimidation in the public sphere also targeted a range of people who were hailed into dominant US concepts of "Islamic fundamentalism" and "terrorism."

Nadine Naber has shown that post-9/11, anti-Arab government policies and everyday forms of harassment in the public sphere have produced disciplinary effects in the everyday lives of Arab and Muslim immigrant communities (Naber 2006). Naber's extensive fieldwork with Arab Muslim and Christian immigrants in the San Francisco Bay Area in the two-year period following the attacks has shown that Muslims and

Christians alike tended to renegotiate the extent to which they displayed emblems of Arab or Muslim identity in the public sphere. These negotiations ranged from decisions over changing one's name to altering one's form of dress as a strategy for avoiding the potential of harassment, surveillance, or violence.

More than years have passed since September 11, 2001. The Bush administration has lost much of its credibility. While in the Obama era there has been a shift beyond the discourses of the war on terror, there have been limited shifts in Obama's policies in Muslim majority countries (e.g., Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan). Our Muslim interlocutors disproportionately feel the impact of post-9/11 US-government discourses and policies in their daily lives, although they impacted Muslims and Christians alike.

Christians from the Arab Region: Methods and Demographics

We interviewed a representative number of Maronite Catholic and Antiochian Orthodox parishioners in the Metro Detroit area, including clergy, male and female lay leaders, recent immigrants, American born, and non-Arab converts. We conducted twenty in-depth interviews over a period of a little more than a year, from summer 2007 to fall 2008. The questions that elicited the most response or discussion were the ones pertaining to the role of faith in the everyday lives of the parishioners; the role of the priest; and the intersection of faith and heritage, including discussions of liturgical language. In addition to conducting interviews, we engaged in participant observation by attending masses, social events, and festivals.

The Metro Detroit area is home to one of the largest Arab and Middle Eastern populations in the United States, as well as to some of the largest and oldest Christian communities from the Arab region. The continual immigration from the Middle East since the late 1800s has created a diverse population of more than a dozen nationalities and every religious denomination found in the Arab region. The diversity of Christians from the Arab region is also reflected in the Metro Detroit population, as there are over twenty churches in the region, such as Antiochian Orthodox, Maronite Catholic, Chaldean, and Coptic. The Antiochian Orthodox and the Maronite Catholic congregations, on whom we focused our study, are two of the largest denominations in the area and were among the first to establish churches.

Our ethnography reveals that the term Arab Christian or Arab American Christian does not adequately capture the range of ways that Christian groups from the Middle East self-identify. The term "Arab Christian" has been used to refer to Christian groups historically and ancestrally tied to the Middle East. These religious groups and their homeland countries include the Antiochian Orthodox (Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and Jordan), the Coptic Orthodox and Coptic Catholic (Egypt), the Chaldeans (Iraq), the Maronite Catholics (Lebanon), and the Melkites (Lebanon). But not all these Christian communities agree with being grouped together under the identifier Arab. They would rather self-identify as Phoenician, in the Maronite case, or Chaldean, or by nationality, such as Lebanese or Palestinian. Our project uses the inclusive terminology "Christians from the Arab region." Our interlocutors would not argue that they or their families come from what is generally understood as the Arab region. Because they speak Arabic, and because many interlocutors who do not self-identity as Arab admit that they do come from "the Arab world," they are comfortable with this terminology. Of course, for the most part, we identify individuals by their religious identity as either Maronite Catholic or Antiochian Orthodox. The nuances of the terminology and the identity categories will be discussed further in the section "Cultural Identity."

Both the Maronites and the Antiochian Orthodox in the Detroit area are largely suburban, professional, and middle class, and almost all speak English, even many of the recent immigrants from the Middle East. Because of these attributes, their experiences in America are similar. Both church communities celebrate their Middle Eastern heritage through food, music, and language; but the hierarchs of both churches have recognized the importance of balancing tradition with becoming an "American" church by adapting to the needs of the community. Much of this balancing act has pivoted on the liturgical uses of their ancestral languages.

For example, the Antiochian Orthodox Church made English the official liturgical language in the 1960s, though Arabic is still used for many prayers and hymns. Father David of the Maronite Church explicated an example of the language issue, in which the patriarch in Lebanon asked priests to "fully retain certain prayers in Syriac . . . so that the commonality of the Maronite Church will be maintained no matter what language you're using as the main language." Father David continues, "So we still maintain three or four prayers always in Syriac no matter what we're using as the main language. That displays the unity of the Maronite Church worldwide." These examples reflect the constant tension in both communities concerning the maintenance of tradition, mostly through ecclesiastical use of Arabic and/or

Syriac, and a desire to minister to newer American-born congregants as well as non-Arab converts. We discuss these ideas more fully in the section "Authenticity: Language and Leadership from the Holy Land."

Both faith traditions maintain ties to their homelands through the transnational social spaces of religion, culture, and politicized action. A pertinent example of their transnational religious ties is the pride both communities take in the fact that their religions originated in the Holy Land in the Middle East. On the front of their weekly church bulletin, *Al-Nour* (*The Light*), the Antiochian Orthodox Basilica of Saint Mary has the verse from Acts 11:26, printed in both English and Arabic script, which gives credence to their ancient religious identity: "And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." Similarly, the Maronite parishes use a Syriac symbol on the front of their bulletin that reads *bet maroon* (house of Maron) and refers to the priests, monks, nuns, and the faithful that make up the Maronite religion worldwide. These are only small examples of the ways that these communities mark themselves within their transnational social spaces. This report will explore not only the scriptural engagement of the Maronite and Antiochian Orthodox communities of greater Detroit, but will highlight their cultural and sometimes political connections to their Middle Eastern homeland and how those connections function within an American religious and sociocultural context.

The Maronite Catholics of Detroit: Two Parishes, One Mission

The Maronite Catholics are the largest Christian community in Lebanon. They trace their origins to St. Maron, a monk who lived in the mountains of Syria in the fifth century. As one of the Eastern-rite Catholic Churches, the Maronites have never cut their ties with Rome, but they have resisted Latinization. The services in the United States are in Arabic, English, and Syriac, which is a spoken form of the ancient Aramaic language. Maronite Catholics made up a large portion of the first wave of immigrants from the Mt. Lebanon area of Syria and settled mostly on the east coast of the United States and in industrial centers. The Lebanese Maronite Catholics have been a continual presence in southeastern Michigan since the first decade of the twentieth century and built the first of two churches in the 1920s. Members of the Maronite churches are also leaders in the Lebanese-American community, holding prominent positions in organizations such as the Lebanese American Chamber of Commerce. They are also known for their entrepreneurship and have opened some of the Detroit area's first Middle Eastern restaurants.

Detroit served as the hub of Maronite Catholicism for the entire country during the 1960s and 1970s. Because of Detroit's large number of Maronites, the Vatican appointed Bishop Francis Zayek to lead the nation's first diocese of the Maronite Church, with its See in Detroit, in the late 1960s and early 1970s. But at the onset of the tragic civil war in Lebanon, the diocese was eventually moved to New York to be closer to the United Nations and Washington, DC (Beggiani n.d.). There are currently two eparchies, or dioceses, of the Maronite Catholic Church in the United States, one in Brooklyn and one in Los Angeles, both of which must answer to the patriarchs in Lebanon.

We conducted fieldwork at two Maronite churches in the Detroit area. St. Maron, the first Maronite church in the region, is an old, brick building with wooden pews and tile flooring. It is jammed between a rough neighborhood in the city of Detroit and an ever-sprawling Chrysler automotive plant. "Chrysler's all around us," laments Father David. The parishioners are typically older, less wealthy, and less "Americanized" than the congregants at the suburban St. Sharbel, a new church with cushioned pews and a carpeted sanctuary. There is certainly enough membership to sustain both churches, considering there are over 4,000 families on the membership rolls, even though a much smaller number actually attends regular masses, according to Father David.

St. Sharbel was birthed in the 1980s from the "mother church," St. Maron, as the members will tell you, a result of the continual movement of parishioners to the suburbs of Detroit. St. Sharbel is an expansive church complex, complete with a bingo and banquet hall, and was built with the intention of replacing St. Maron, though the older generations of parishioners have always resisted closing St. Maron. There is recognition that because of their locations and the different populations they serve, it is important to maintain both. When we conducted our fieldwork with the two parishes, St. Maron was temporarily without a priest, so Father David was administrator of both parishes, a daunting task indeed. But he is committed to maintaining the integrity of both churches. He assured his congregation at St. Sharbel, following a mass, that "St. Maron will close over my dead body."

The Antiochian Orthodox: A Basilica for the Future

The Antiochian Orthodox Church is best described as being the Arab branch of Orthodox Christianity. It shares the exact same doctrinal and liturgical aspects as the Greek Orthodox Church, but because it developed

in the Middle East and historically had its religious See or Patriarch in the city of Antioch (it is now in Damascus, Syria), it is linguistically and culturally distinct from the Greek, Russian, Serbian, Romanian, and other nationalist Orthodox Churches. Father John, a long-serving immigrant priest educated at the Orthodox seminary in Lebanon, describes the church thusly: "Really the original name of the Church should be the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch but I think for some reason, the founding fathers of this Church . . . I think we chose to take the Antiochian name to refer that we are from the Middle East and Arab American."

The Antiochian Orthodox began arriving in the United States with the first wave of immigrants from the Middle East in the late nineteenth century, along with Maronite and Melkite Catholics, from Lebanon and Syria. Many Antiochian Orthodox communities were established in the early 1900s, mostly in industrial centers in Massachusetts, New York City, Pittsburgh, Detroit, and Toledo. The first Antiochian Orthodox Church in the United States began as the Syro-Arab Mission of Brooklyn, a part of the larger Russian Orthodox Church in 1904. The Church in the United States was referred to as the Syrian Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese until the 1960s, when it dropped "Syrian" and adopted the title "Antiochian" to recognize the Church's roots in the city of Antioch, where followers of Jesus were first called Christians. There are now nearly 250 parishes in North America, broken up into seven dioceses, all under the jurisdiction of Metropolitan Philip Saliba, who has served as primate of the Archdiocese for over forty years. Unlike the Maronites, the Orthodox have gained a more autonomous relationship with respect to their patriarch in Syria, and are thus able to make some organizational decisions without approval from Damascus, but all theological issues are still conducted through the hierarchy in Syria.

Like the Maronite community of greater Detroit, the Antiochian Orthodox churches in the area serve as an important hub for the religion in the United States and as an important part of the Arab American community of Metro Detroit. Our fieldwork was conducted at one of the large, suburban parishes in southeastern Michigan. Similar to the history of the Detroit Maronites, St. Mary's is an offshoot of an original Antiochian Church, one of the older Orthodox parishes in the Midwest that was originally founded in the city of Detroit in the 1910s. St. Mary's is firmly implanted as one of the largest and continuously growing Antiochian parishes in the country, and has hosted regional and national archdiocesan conventions.

In the 1970s, Father John, the current priest, was sent from Syria to Michigan to help develop the parish. What started with "4–5 women

and 2 men," according to Father John, kept growing through the 1970s because "the war kept going in Lebanon and Palestine," so there was continual immigration to the area. What started with a few first-generation Lebanese and Palestinians has now grown to an immense parish, including nearly 400 church school children. Deacon Mark describes the church building as the central meeting space for all life's events, for the young and the old:

> There are all the sacramental services of the church; baptism, weddings and all these things. This happens a lot here. It's a big community and in fact a week ago, we had a day that was so draining because we started with funeral of a very young woman who lost her life to cancer and left a very young family. An hour later, we jumped right into a baptism of a brand new Christian. An hour later we had a wedding, a very large family. So we had that element and mostly this happens during the weekends but that was an unbelievable day. But all week long we have opportunities for infants all the way to seniors to gather here at this church.

Between Homeland Politics and Americanization: The Transnational Christian Communities of Greater Detroit

Even though we conducted research with two different Christian faith traditions, the members of both communities share similar histories and both function as transnational religious communities, constantly engaged in the tasks of building their churches and developing their communities in the United States, with a constant eye on their homeland, and always within the context of US politics and interventions in the Arab region. This section will elaborate on the shared histories and dynamics of the Antiochian and Maronite Churches in the United States, focusing on the church as a space of worship as well as a cultural center and its role in the transnational activities of these ancient faith communities. But we recognize that this space is spiritual and divine. As much as we can evaluate and present the Maronites and Orthodox as simply an ethnic or cultural affiliation, their transnational communities are still formed around and based on the church building, the priest, and their scriptures. You will find in this chapter that in each section we move closer to the scriptural engagement of the Christian communities under study, even as all the sections are premised on the fact that these are transnational religious communities shaped by the Arab/American divide in various ways.

Regarding the role of the space of the church among Christians from the Arab region, we found the following: first, it was the stage upon which an ethno-religious community was made and remade in America. Church leaders explained that the church is not a building at all, but constituted the body of their religion. Second, it is the place where the liturgy works through the worship of people. It is also the place of communion, where people encounter Christ in the Eucharist, one of the central pillars of their faith. Many explained that it is the people that make the church and that their faith is based upon worshiping together. Third, several interlocutors stressed that the church is a place made up of people with a shared culture and therefore is much more than a religious venue. They feel at home at church. Others value it as a place to pass on their culture to their children and to participate in keeping their cultures and histories alive. Especially for those who live in predominantly white neighborhoods, the church provides them with a space of belonging in the face of cultural difference and isolation. At the same time, this produces the challenge that for some people the church becomes a space for building an ethnic or cultural community more than a religious place. Church leaders shared concern about this. From our fieldwork it is apparent that the church space serves numerous roles.

Although many of our interlocutors discussed their cultural identity in relation to the church, none of these concerns is new for either the Maronites or the Orthodox. Since their arrival in the United States in the late 1800s and early 1900s, these mostly Lebanese and Palestinian immigrants have struggled to balance their faith, their cultural identity, and the processes of Americanization. Scholars of Arab American history and scholars of the history of religion and immigration in general have always seen the church or other places of worship as a site which can act not only as a place of socialization into the American way of life, but can simultaneously have an insular effect in which the community can maintain its cultural traditions.[13]

Arab American scholars who focus on religion have always written about religious identity as a first-order loyalty among the transnational Maronites and Orthodox.[14] It was through their religious affiliations that most Maronites and Antiochian Orthodox responded to events in the homeland. Even the secular social and cultural clubs were closely affiliated with the churches in that the leaders of these clubs also tended to be active members of their respective churches.[15]

Historians of these early mostly Syrian and Lebanese communities write that groups of immigrants from the Arab region living together did not feel

like a community until they had established a church, or at least had their own priest.[16] The church was a space for families, for education, to receive news from the homeland and to hold fundraisers to build up their communities here and back home, celebrate, eat Middle Eastern dishes, and speak Arabic. All of this was, of course, in addition to the church serving as a space for connection to the spiritual and the divine. From the responses of our interlocutors, it is clear that the church is not just a place, but an ideal. Deacon Mark, who is Antiochian Orthodox, says it best:

> To me, the church is not a building at all. It's everybody, and not just the priest. If we put our hope in the priest, God help us. In the bishops, God help us. But together, it's the body of Christ on earth. [. . .] Christ talked about, and the Christians in the early church talked about, liturgy. *Leiturgia* in work means work of the people. Our life is to work to worship.

The Maronite and Antiochian parishioners see church as a joyful place where they come to see family and friends and worship together, regardless of the language spoken or the types of food served at luncheons and dinners after services. Hoda, an active parishioner says, "I don't come to church because it's an obligation. I come because I love to come to church. The celebration of our Maronite mass, I feel like I'm going to a party. It gives me such a joy; I don't know how to explain it to you. It's so beautiful to me." Barbara, a fellow Maronite woman explains that "I've come to love all the Maronite people, it's like family here. I just feel at home here. I feel it's my second home. When I was going to Roman Catholic churches, we had a business, we'd leave, we never really got involved so since I've been at St. Maron, I've really gotten involved, and it's why I said, it feels like family now." A long-serving Orthodox deacon recognizes that "you can't go just only to go to church . . . but many people say, 'I want to go see my cousin or friend or this and that.' " Later, this deacon elaborates on the purpose of the church: "The purpose for the church—it is just like the hand, the chicken—when they hold her babies under her wings, that is what the church does. It protects us under her wings."

But in an immigrant and transnational community, feeling like church is a space for sharing your life with family and friends is only a short distance away from seeing it as a space for cultural preservation. Being protected like a chick by its mother may also mean the insulation from the processes of Americanization that immigrant communities often lament. Consider two Orthodox women who locate themselves within the space of St. Mary's in very similar ways.

Rita says, "People I hang out with everyday are from the church community. A community with a shared culture. It's important to be with each other because we understand the rules . . . raise kids together. My kids go to Arabic school, Sunday school, and I take them to as many events as I can." She says her children are what "brought her back to church" as well as being around "other Arabs and Palestinians." She continues, "We live in a white area . . . we are the minority . . . me and my friend are only Arabs in [our town] . . . I take her to church to socialize with other Arabs."

Another Orthodox woman who recently moved to the area says her fellow parishioners are her close friends now. "Plus," she says, "the culture is that we all pretty much grew up the same and have the same rules so it's easier to relate to them. We all go to church together. I fit in within the first week. I had invitations to go to people's houses for dinner and I speak Arabic fluently so I fit in great with the people. I just felt welcomed right away."

In the Maronite and Antiochian Orthodox communities of greater Detroit, faith and culture are always joined, especially in the context of the homeland/hostland divide. To be Maronite is to be Lebanese. To be Antiochian Orthodox is to support the Palestinian cause. The connection between a religious and political/national identity is one way these transnational communities engage with their homelands within the US context.[17]

We do not use the term "transnational" lightly or only because it is a contemporary buzzword across many disciplines. The communities we work with are truly transnational in that there is a constant engagement with the homeland through political, cultural, and religious social spaces, and much of it occurs through the space of the church. Politically, the members of both congregations are highly aware of issues in their homelands of Lebanon and Palestine. The priests will give updates about casualties or even on the political situation in the homeland during announcements before or after service or during their homilies. The archdiocese for both faith traditions sponsors charities that give money directly to humanitarian causes in Lebanon and Palestine, whether for seminaries, hospitals, or the refugees of recent conflicts. Also, the members may show support for political figures in the homeland.

At one Sunday Maronite mass, many men wore buttons depicting former general and political leader in Lebanon Beshir Gemayal, a Maronite. The mass had been offered, in part, for the twenty-fifth anniversary of his assassination during the Lebanese Civil War.[18] During a break in the mass, a Maronite deacon read a letter to the congregation in Arabic, invoking the memory of Beshir Gemayel and discussing his importance to Lebanon. After the mass Elie, a young immigrant parishioner, said that the

Gemayel family was like the Kennedys because of all they had sacrificed for Lebanon.[19] The incident is one that you would only find at a Maronite church, because of the political affiliations. Even though Gemayel was a Lebanese political and military figure, Lebanese Shi'a or Sunni Muslims as well as most Orthodox Christians would not see him as a figure worth honoring. Only a deep transnational connection to the homeland would make it possible for a Sunday mass at a parish in greater Detroit to be sponsored in part by a Lebanese political party. An episode like this is important to this project because it vividly demonstrates how the space of church becomes a major site through which to express a shared religious, political, and cultural identity.

Similar connections to political developments in the Middle East occur frequently in the Antiochian Orthodox Church as well. During the Israeli siege on Gaza in the winter of 2008/09, Father John read updates from the pulpit that had been written and distributed by the archdiocese, and many of his sermons offered hope for peace. The congregants also took up special collections to send to the victims of the fighting in Palestine. Although this can be seen as a political action in the context of US involvement with Israeli interests, the Orthodox parishioners, many of whom are Palestinian, see it mostly as a Christian, humanitarian act. The archdiocese has large charities in place that support the refugees of the Palestinian conflicts, showing not only where their interests lie but also their continued transnational connections with their collective homelands. Many interlocutors, mostly Maronite, discussed the idea that their religio-cultural identity came with an a priori political identity. Hoda, a devout Maronite and Lebanese-born immigrants quips, "Once you're Lebanese it runs in your blood, the politics."[20]

Culturally, both congregations highlight their Middle Eastern heritage through church sponsored *haflat* (parties), dinners, and *mahrajanat* (festivals). Food and music is a major identity marker for the congregants of both traditions. Father David drummed up support for an upcoming banquet celebrating the arrival of the bishop by announcing from the pulpit, "We can *debkeh* until our Lebanese feet fall off." The *debkeh* is a popular Middle Eastern folk dance. When asked about their cultural identity, most of the second- and third-generation parishioners discussed the foods they grew up eating, such as kibbee, hummus, and rolled grape leaves, as evidence of their cultural heritage. Food is also celebrated by these Christian communities at annual festivals. Each summer the churches hold large-scale cultural festivals as fundraisers, complete with Arabic music, dancing, and traditional food. These festivals are meant to attract outsiders in

order to make money. During the festivals, the parishioners play up their Lebanese of Arab heritage, again making the church the main site for cultural identification.[21]

In the religious context, the hierarchies of both faith traditions continually travel between Lebanon and Syria to attend synods and weigh in on decisions that affect the religions worldwide. Priests from the Balamand Orthodox Seminary in Lebanon continue to arrive in the United States to serve as clergy. Many parishioners watch services from Lebanon via Arabic satellite channels. The religious dimension of the transnationality of the Maronites and the Orthodox is perhaps the strongest and most vivid dimension for the parishioners, especially concerning the liturgical use of Arabic and Syriac. As we explore in the next sections, one's religious identity as either Orthodox or Maronite typically structures, or at least influences, the cultural expressions of the congregants in the United States. Parishioners came to the church not just to pray and worship but also to explore and express their identities as Maronites, Antiochian Orthodox, Lebanese, Palestinian, Arab, or Phoenician.

Cultural Identity

Though both communities are positioned similarly vis-à-vis US media depictions of Arabs and the Middle East, US imperial and military ventures in the Arab region, and the discourses of terrorism and homeland security, they express themselves differently, mostly through their religious identities, as a result. Below is a lengthy exploration of the intersections of political, cultural, and religious identity among the Maronite and Antiochian Orthodox of the greater Detroit area. We thought it was important for this section to reflect the discussion among our interlocutors *in their own words*. What this section demonstrates is that the term "Arab Christian" is too broad and is not applicable or relevant to many of our respondents, especially the Maronites. It is our explicit intention to complicate the term "Arab Christian" by showing that many Christians from the Arab region reject the term "Arab" as a marker of self-identity. As mentioned in the introduction, US government and corporate media discourses have constructed an Arab Muslim enemy. People perceived to be in this category have been targeted, especially after 9/11, regardless of the fact that many of those perceived to be Arab Muslim include non-Arab Muslims as well as non-Muslims. Our interlocutors, even though they are Christian, have been forced to contend with these discourses, and this has helped to shape the way they identify themselves in the American context.

For some of our interlocutors, it resulted in a deemphasizing of their Arab background and an enhancement of their Christian identity. Others emphasize their experiences as Arab Christians as distinct from the problems that their Muslim counterparts have faced.

Maronite Catholics' Cultural Identity

Concerning the cultural identity of Maronite Catholics, our research illustrated the following: First, most Maronites felt strongly that they were Lebanese or Phoenician, not Arab. Many had a disdain for the label "Arab." Disassociating from that label was, in part, a strategy for disassociating from the negative imagery associated with Arabs and Muslims in the United States. Second, there is a strong association between being Maronite and being Lebanese. Consider, for example, that one of the churches uses the national symbol of Lebanon, a cedar tree—which sits at the center of the Lebanese flag—to represent their church.[22] Third, liturgical language, whether Arabic or Syriac, plays a major role in defining a Maronite religio-cultural identity.

A large percentage of our interviews began with a discussion of the terms "Arab" or "Arab Christian," since we introduced the project to our interlocutors as one that would explore the scriptural engagements of Arab American Christians. This often prompted lengthy responses about respondents' uneasiness with being included in a study about Arabs or Arab Americans. Offered here is a sampling of how the parishioners of the Maronite churches envision themselves in relation to the term "Arab" or the national identity of "Lebanese":

> Fouad, a middle-aged Maronite immigrant: I would say I'm Lebanese. Until I'm proven that I'm Arab, which I don't think I'm proven that I'm Arab because I want to go back to the old, old times. The Arab country was not where Lebanon was, so that came around after and then they announced it as an Arab country after so many years. So I want to be distinguished then [from] Arab because when you say Arabs then they associate you right away with terrorism.

Notice that Fouad connects being labeled Arab with being considered an enemy Other in the America context. He continues:

> To us, now more than ever there is terrorism involved and when you say Arab right away they associate with them; I do want to make a distinction.

> That's why I go back to the old times way back in the biblical times and Lebanon was not an Arab land. But it's hard; this is where it becomes hard for people to distinguish between terrorist and not terrorist. That's very important to us and I'm glad you're doing this interview because we can share our side of the story.

Another male parishioner says simply, "Actually, I like to be Lebanese American. I speak Arabic. I mean we speak the Arabic language, but I'm Lebanese-American." Hoda, an active Maronite parishioner, says she considers herself Lebanese because she was born in Lebanon, and Maronite Catholic, but also American because she has lived in the United States longer than in Lebanon.

An immigrant physician and long-serving member of the Maronite community in greater Detroit offers this explanation:

> I have a lot of friends in the Arabic community. But there's a misconception in this country. They lump us all together. We are descendants of the Phoenicians. The Phoenicians are not Arabs. . . .
>
> The Maronite Christian people are descendants of the Phoenicians. These are our grand grand grand grand grand fathers. But in this country, sorry to say, they don't understand the difference between Maronite, Melkite, Orthodox, first of all, the Christian element of the community, and they don't understand who's an Arab and who's not an Arab. Now, the Arabs have their own glorious history, glorious tradition. We had to study all their traditions. And they had fantastic people who were very, very smart, who contributed a lot to the history of the Arab region, but to say that we are Arab Christians, it is wrong because it is not so.

Finally, Maronite priest Father David furthers the distinction between Muslims as Arabs and Maronites as Lebanese and Christian:

> Because for us Lebanese, Arab means, usually means, Muslim, it means non-Christian, it means invaders, in some ways. And so, they never identify themselves as Arabs. They were always Lebanese: Lebanese American, Lebanese period. And always from Mount Lebanon, that area of Lebanon which is the Maronite stronghold of today. The lines have been blurred, and clearly today many Lebanese have no problems being called Arab American. But to those of us who are second, third generation, we do. Because we grew up having hammered into us: you are *not* Arab, you are *not* Muslim.

Based on this discussion we took seriously the charge of recognizing the importance of how the Maronites identify themselves. As researchers, it is easy to label them Arab Americans or Arab Christians, but it is clear that they see themselves as something more nuanced and distinct. And especially because this identity is tied up with spiritual belief (i.e., the Maronite faith), we honor their self-identification.[23]

The connection between being Maronite and being Lebanese is also heightened when these parishioners discuss the role of the church in their lives, especially the liturgical use of Arabic or Syriac, which is discussed again in later sections because it is a major theme of the project. Regardless of the language of the mass or the country in which it is performed, the parishioners are adamant that the essence of the faith is preserved:

> Obviously, you don't go to Lebanon and hear a mass in English. But, everything else is the same. The mass is the same in Lebanon, the same in Argentina, same in Brazil, same in Lebanon, with the exception of the language in Lebanon, they don't say it in English. Other countries, they say it in their language partly and then in the language of Arabic.

In this section on cultural identity, we want to highlight how the use of non-English languages in the mass can actually create tensions between the generations of parishioners. One parishioner explains, "Now you can see that the gospel was read in both languages, the epistle was read in both languages [today]. The reason for that is for the younger generation to understand what it means because they come in and they sit and they are bewildered as to what's going on. They don't know what's going on. They don't have the background like we did. They were born in this county, never exposed to it. Consequently, that was limited to what we teach them."As Father David explains, the fact that the church is in America and not Lebanon makes the language/culture discussion more pertinent:

> Younger people want to come here because we use English. And they're beginning to identify more spiritually with us than ethnically. So even though we're Lebanese, they begin to see themselves more as Maronites. And Maronites are more than just Lebanese. But Maronites are far more than just Lebanese, that's the point. [. . .] We have been using English as our main language for the last forty years. Now, in many of our churches, Arabic's becoming the main language. And we've had many of our American-born Maronites drifting away because they will not go back to a foreign language.

Sam, an older immigrant parishioner, breaks down the divide between the generations by highlighting the different masses:

> You have one mass in English and one mass half of it English, and unfortunately we lose a lot of the younger generations who are born in the States because they speak only English and there's a big competition between the Latin Church where families will migrate, especially because of the school, to send their kids to the Latin Church.

This leads to the final point, that beyond all the discussions about culture, language, or politics, the parishioners are still members of a faith community. When they were asked, "What does it mean to be a Maronite Catholic?" many of their responses took on a cultural or historical element, as well as a spiritual one. One parishioner spoke of the "tradition" of the faith: "Well, we are born with this tradition, as you know. We don't choose our religion. It is chosen for us. We grew up with it. We learned all about it. We practiced it. And we love its history."

The idea of the Maronite faith being a "tradition" came up numerous times. For example, "It's a glorified tradition, it's an excellent tradition and we practice it daily and weekly. And we baptize our children in the same rite. We confirm them in the same rite. We teach them all about the rites before we eat, before we gather together. We say certain prayers that are appropriate to our rite and we maintain religion in all aspects of our life." Every one of the Maronite Catholics we talked to said that they were Maronite because their parents were Maronite.[24] There are very few converts in the churches where we conducted our fieldwork. We believe this has to do with the nature of the Maronite religion being so intertwined with a specific national or cultural identity. We found more converts in the Antiochian Orthodox faith. Even though the Antiochian Archdiocese is affiliated with the Arab region and many parishioners are from there or have at least part of their ancestry there, there is a concerted effort to not be merely an ethnic church, but an Orthodox church. Of course, there are tensions around this, especially in a large parish where over 95 percent of the congregants are of Arab heritage.

Antiochian Orthodox Cultural Identity

In discussions on cultural identity, the following themes emerged: first, Antiochian research participants shared a close connection to an Arab or Arab American cultural identity that was directly connected to their Antiochian identity. Consider that Antochians nationwide as well as at

St. Mary use many "Arab" cultural symbols in their church and church literature, including self-Orientalizing images of camels and sheikhs, as well as historical imagery such as Arabic calligraphy and tapestries. Second, a commitment to being part of one "family" and "community" was central to their Arab cultural identity. Third, the different generations (immigrants and second-generation members) created a chance for cultural continuity but were also a site of tension and difference. For instance, our interlocutors frequently brought up the issue of language, and whether or not using Arabic in liturgical services was a hindrance to the nonimmigrants or even the non-Arab congregants. Finally, we found the biggest difference between the Maronites and the Orthodox to be that the Orthodox envision themselves as a church that welcomes non-Arab converts. Whereas the Maronites are always also Lebanese, the Orthodox more often put faith before cultural identity, even though the majority of the interlocutors closely identified as both Arab and some other nationality, such as Lebanese or Palestinian, in addition to Antiochian Orthodox.

Father John helped to explain the balance that the Antiochian Archdiocese has tried to maintain in the United States. He spoke of the leadership of Metropolitan Philip Saliba, who has headed the archdiocese for over forty years. Within the first few years of Saliba's enthronement, he pushed to change the name of the archdiocese from the Syrian Antiochian Orthodox Church to its more simplified Antiochian title, which refers more to the birthplace of the theology than the birthplace of the parishioners. Even though Metropolitan Philip was instrumental in keeping English as the official language of the archdiocese and has pushed for and accepted converts of all faiths and nationalities, Saliba continues to use both Arabic and English in speeches, letters, and services. As Father John says, "Matter of fact, Metropolitan Philip never attended a church service or presided over a liturgy but used one-third of his service in the Arabic. I think he encouraged it. He is the man who believed that Orthodoxy can be of help and can be of light to America but never to give up truth."

Father John is hinting here at the fact that many Antiochian Orthodox churches, especially those in areas that do not continually receive large groups of new immigrants from the Middle East, such as Kansas, Oklahoma, and Pennsylvania, are now a majority non-Arab converts. Although some people embrace this fact as a sign that the archdiocese is growing and has shed its national or cultural identity, others worry that the Church may lose its roots as the Arab branch of Orthodox Christianity. This tension is not only generational, as you will see, but also exists between converts and "cradle" parishioners, as they are called.

The parishioners and clergy feel deeply connected with a mother church that is "still alive in Antioch today in Damascus headed by the patriarch and the holy senate," as Father John elaborates. "We are a living member of that church. Everyone needs to have roots." In the Antiochian Orthodox Church, those roots are firmly planted in Lebanon and Syria, where the religious See is currently located. Although many agreed that first and foremost, they are committed to "seeking the Kingdom of God," in the words of a convert deacon, at the same time "being Arab is crucial." Deacon Mark, a white American deacon illustrated this sentiment when he said that it is a compliment when people at church assume he is Arab.

As Arab culture is typically seen as being very family oriented, it is not surprising that the parishioners of St. Mary connect "family" with "church." Comments such as those from Fadi are not the exception: "This church, I think it's a family here. I like coming to a family. Father makes them feel at home so much that they worship the ground that he walks on. They love him and his family." Deacon Mark picks up on this love of "church family" and connects it to what he sees as an element of "Middle Eastern culture":

> There is another verse I learned that I live my life by…"a new commandment I give unto you that you love one another even as Christ has loved you"…that's the new commandment, that's the 11th commandment. It doesn't overwrite anything but…I think that it cancels the rest of them. This is the message and this is what [Fr. John] has taken very seriously in the ministry he has been entrusted with. […] I'm thankful that it has that culture because there is something about the Middle Eastern culture that I love. There is an ethos that is very family based and love based and this is where Christ is from, this is where Christianity was established and I think that in America, we have a lot to learn about love. I think it is self love, *eros* or erotic love of yourself, when we need to be looking for *agape* love, it's Godly love.

Deacon Elias echoes Deacon Mark:

> Our people are very peaceful people, very generous people and they love each other, especially when somebody dies.…They stand together, they unite together, they love each other, they like to help each other. This is very important between the families because we came from one country, a small country like Ramallah [in Palestine], so we know each other and we came here. Just a few families migrated and came to the United States in 1932. Our people are very nice people.

Cultural Identity through Language and Generation

One of the questions we asked of every interlocutor that always elicited a quick and emotional response was about the use of Arabic during church services. Some parishioners and clergy liked the "flavor" the Arabic language gave to the liturgy, while others saw it as a hindrance to their ability to worship. While it would be less messy to say that the differences in reactions broke down along generational lines, or between the Arab and non-Arab members, that is not necessarily the case. Deacon Mark, for example, is trying to learn certain prayers in Arabic so he can be more active during liturgical services. Father John says young parishioners always ask him to perform their wedding services in Arabic, even if the bride or groom does not speak the language. "It's a way to connect," he says. "I find out even when young people want to get married, want baptism, they say, Father, please use Arabic." Sara, a young second-generation Palestinian American and active youth-group member says, "I really don't understand Arabic too much. I can read and write but I don't really speak it that much. So if I were to just stay in church and they just did it in Arabic, I probably wouldn't go." What we found, then, is that everyone had an opinion about the use of Arabic in church and that it was not possible to predict who would feel which way about it. Everyone tended to agree, though, that the use of Arabic as a liturgical language was connected to a sense of cultural identity.

A young Arab American subdeacon lays out the range of issues that we encountered in our ethnographic work:

> There's always a constant struggle over which language to use in church. People get offended over this. People want what they are comfortable with. I speak fluent Arabic, but the Arabic we use in church is more classical Arabic and I don't understand all of it. I studied a good amount before I was able to understand and I still don't understand everything but it enhances it. I think the culture in general, because in the Middle East and Greece, they understand what Orthodoxy is.

As we will explore in the section "Authenticity: Language and Leadership from the Holy Land," the faith's historical and cultural linkages to the Middle East are what the members take the most pride in. The Maronite Catholics and the Antiochian Orthodox have to navigate this balance of being a church in America that needs to minister to a growing American

flock, while simultaneously maintaining their ancient connections to the Holy Land, which is what truly sets these faith traditions apart from other Christian denominations in the United States.

Afterword: The Relevance of September 11, 2001

Much of the discussion about the post-9/11 experience among the Maronite and Orthodox parishioners and clergy focused on the need for the American public to understand that not everyone from the Middle East is Muslim, and that there are indeed large groups of Christians in the Arab region. The interlocutors were not being malicious in separating themselves out from Muslims; instead, they were merely trying to differentiate themselves. Numerous respondents praised the project because it would help show the American public that there are many types of faith communities from the Middle East, and Arabs in the United States are not the way they appear on TV and in movies. Hoda wants people to have an accurate picture of Christians from the Arab region and to not be lumped in with Muslims, though she assured me that she was not prejudiced. She wanted people to be educated about the differences among peoples from the Middle East.

Our interlocutors also felt the need to differentiate themselves from Arab Muslims, because the Christians, for the most part, did not see themselves as victims of any post-9/11 backlash, but felt thankful that they did not experience the same dilemma as the Muslim communities.[25] They were also sympathetic to the Muslim plight. Father John spoke of this following 9/11: "I was asked this question by many senators and congressmen and FBI. But we [the people of St. Mary] have never once had any problem. Don't forget at least in general public you do not distinguish an Orthodox from an Italian, but you can distinguish a Muslim by his habit." Another interlocutor spoke about experiencing the aftermath of 9/11 in ways that were different from Arab American Muslims. A congress person who met with them after 9/11 reinforced the difference by privileging them over the Muslims in the area and telling them they had nothing to worry about. Following 9/11, parishioners turned to prayer with feelings of fear and gave special prayers for peace, and said that more and more people prayed and came together. The church was a comforting space during this time. The aftermath of 9/11 also brought Muslims and Christians together and created unity since Arabs and Muslims were facing similar problems. Father John was involved in numerous interfaith programs. The role of prayer following 9/11 is discussed again later in the section "Scriptural Reading."

Authenticity: Language and Leadership from the Holy Land

The spiritual fathers. The desert fathers. These are phrases we heard often when talking with Orthodox and Maronite Catholics. They refer to the early Christian theologians and religious leaders from the Middle East. For Arab and Maronite Christians, the Middle East is not only the birthplace of Jesus but also the birthplace of their Orthodox and Catholic churches, as well as the birthplace of their ancestors; and for many members of the Maronite and Antiochian Churches, the land of their own birth. Both churches are tied to the Holy Land by both language and history. This engagement with the ancient Christianity of the Middle East is most evident in the ways in which the congregants frame their ecclesiastical use of Syriac and Arabic as languages which can bring them closer to the historical and spiritual Jesus. Also, the leadership, as in patriarchs, bishops, priests, and deacons, are seen as both literal and figurative descendants of Christ's apostles and living connections to the homeland/Holy Land. Whereas US popular and political discourses figure Arabs and peoples from the Middle East as Muslims and therefore threats, these Arab and Maronite Christians have continually played up their identity as descendants of the first Christians from the Holy Land. Perhaps Rita, an Antiochian Orthodox parishioner stated it most succinctly: "As far as 'Holy Land' . . . people use it as bragging rights. We come from the holiest place in the world, where Jesus was born."

In the sections that follow, we discuss the claims to this religious authenticity that the Antiochians and Maronites have: those of ancient languages and ecclesiastic authority, both of which stem from their connection to the Holy Land. As we did in the previous section on cultural identity, in this section we will show, on the local level, how these communities have negotiated the ways that United States and European imperialism have given value to certain identity categories. We have shown how the claims to and avoidance of the label of "Arab" in the cultural context was borne out in the comments and stories of our interlocutors. Here, as well, the Maronites and Orthodox stake their claims to a specific ancient Arab or Middle Eastern identity, but within a religious context.

The Orthodox believe that they hold the key to the unchanging Church of Christ, spiritually descendant from St. Peter of the city of Antioch, where followers of Jesus were first called Christians. Further, they believe their Church is physically linked with the Middle East, the Holy Land, because their membership is overwhelmingly Lebanese and Palestinian. Theirs is a critical two-part claim to authenticity. First, they are doctrinally orthodox and the physical descendants of the spiritual, desert fathers of

the Holy Land. The Church maintains that the ordination of their bishops and priests can be traced back to the laying on of hands by St. Peter who ordained Christianity's first hierarchs in the city of Antioch. This sort of authenticity of the priesthood plays out in the ways in which the priest is imbued with much of the authority of the Church. In both the Orthodox and Maronite denominations, in the absence of a priest there are very limited prayer services that can be done. A liturgy cannot be performed without a priest, as he is learned and the only one who can bring it to life.

Second, the Arab members of the Antiochian Orthodox Church are culturally linked to the Middle East because it is their homeland. There is a reason that much of the music is sung or canted in Arabic, even in the congregations where only a small percentage of parishioners actually speak Arabic: it is their tie to the authentic Christianity of the Middle East. This sort of historical, cultural, and hierarchical provenance is unique to Christian churches originating in what is now known as the Arab region and often referred to as the Holy Land. At St. Mary's, the vast majority of the liturgy is conducted in English. There are hymns that the choir sings in Arabic. The Epistle, the Gospel, the Nicene Creed, and the Lord's Prayer are read or recited in both English and Arabic.

Authenticity in the Maronite Church in America functions in similar ways to the Orthodox. The members still speak of the spiritual fathers, but they are also more likely to mention the continual use of Syriac in their services as proof of their authenticity. Syriac, the members will tell you, is the language of Jesus, or similar to the language of Jesus, or dates from the time of Jesus, depending on whom you talk to. All Maronite priests learn Syriac, and many of the crucial prayers during the mass are in Syriac. The members are adamant that Syriac must be kept alive as an authentic aspect of Maronite Christianity. St. Maron in Detroit has been holding basic Syriac language classes for its members, but they still rely on the priests and the hierarchs to sustain the language. The Maronites also maintain a sense of connection to the landscape of the Holy Land through references to the "desert fathers" and examples like the "Faith of the Mountain" religious-education series, which is a coloring book series for Maronite children. The "mountain" refers to the mountain in Syria where St. Maron lived. Finally, as discussed in other sections in this chapter, the American Maronites' ongoing historical, political, cultural, and family ties to Lebanon maintain the idea of being a part of the ancient church of the Holy Land.

As far as priestly authority and authenticity go, the priest seems to be charged not only with maintaining the Syriac language tradition, and thus a sense of ancient Christian authenticity, but also with continuing the

tradition started by a fifth-century monk from the mountains of Syria; this means that the priest's authority is partly a result of the continued embodiment of this ancient desert father from which the Maronite Church sprang. Much like the Orthodox Church, there are very limited services that can be done in the absence of clergy. A service conducted without a priest would not be unauthentic, but it would be unauthorized by the patriarchs in Lebanon and the hierarchy in the United States.

Language and Authenticity

A physician and a prominent member of Detroit's Maronite community offered an examination of the role of Syriac: "What most Christians don't realize, and I didn't realize until a few years back, that really Jesus, when he spoke, he didn't speak Hebrew. Hebrew was the language of the rich and around Jerusalem. And the common people, the poor people…were speaking Aramaic. And Jesus's language, as far as we know, was Aramaic. That's why the Maronite Church prides itself in having the Aramaic, the western Aramaic." Syriac was a spoken dialect of Aramaic. "And I think it's a lovely language, which some of us are pursuing here and we're going back to our roots." Nabil is referring to the Syriac classes that his parish offers. They are only basic courses, but the point is that the churches in the United States are playing an active role in keeping the ancient liturgical language alive. He says that since the Arabs have dominated Syria and the surrounding areas for over 1500 years, "You have to learn Arabic, you know." But speaking Arabic, for him, doesn't make him Arab. "I've been in this country 33, 34 years, obviously I speak English. Does it make me English?" Syriac signals not only his identity as a Maronite Catholic, but his identity as a Lebanese Christian and a non-Arab, exemplifying the complex ways that religious and cultural identity are interwoven in the Maronite and Antiochian Churches.

St. Mary's, like many Antiochian parishes across the country, especially those with immigrant populations, also offers classes in its ancient liturgical language. Although the official ecclesiastical language of the ancient Orthodox Church was Greek, the Antiochians have celebrated their liturgies in Arabic for centuries, and much like the Maronites, tend to see their cultural and religious identities through language.[26]

But there is a slight disconnect between the clergy and parishioners on this matter. An Orthodox subdeacon connects the liturgical language debate to more important aspects of the faith: "When you stick to Arabic, it's because that's what we did before. It has no theology. It's a tradition with a little 't.' One of our modern theologians, he's a metropolitan in

England, he says a tradition with a big 'T' is something like a dogma of the church; the trinity, the virgin . . . things like that. Traditions with a little 't' are things like dyeing [Easter] eggs red, speaking a language in church and such things. So it's o.k. to lose the little 't's, although I think they are nice sometimes, we can never lose the big 'T's."

Father John and Father David, though they both love the tradition of keeping Arabic or Syriac in the liturgy, understand that this is only a tradition with a small "t." Father David seems to downplay the role of Syriac in "captur[ing] a sense of scripture and a sense of spirituality," because he says "that can be communicated in any language."

> Syriac is our official language, but we've used Arabic, we've used Greek in Cyprus. So we do have different languages that have been part of our tradition, even though Syriac has always been our main liturgical language. So linguistically it doesn't make a whole lot of difference because the prayers are relevant in any language.

But that ever-present tradition with a small 't,' is significant to the life of church, especially concerning language, even though it may not affect doctrine or big 'T' tradition. Father David says that since Maronites "are now to be found on every single country in the world," keeping the main prayers in Syriac will maintain the "commonality of the Maronite Church . . . no matter what language you're using as the main language."

Father John sees Greek as the true language of Church scripture, but makes certain to tie Arabic closely to it. It is also an argument that is more about culture and style than scripture: "Don't forget when you read scripture in its original language Greek, and translated to Arabic, there is this ethos of chanting. And when you chant in Arabic or Greek, it sounds more alive than chanting in English, because English is not really a prayerful language. It is a business language. But we have beautiful choirs that sing in English. We're learning. We're adapting to write music, hymns that are in Byzantine tunes instead of western notation or western style."

Even though the clergy recognize that the church is the church no matter the language, the parishioners continually view the use of Arabic or Syriac as important to both their cultural and religious identity. "You have to look at the liturgy as part of tradition. You cannot look at it any other way," explains a Maronite lay leader. He continues:

> There's lots of words in the Maronite mass which are Syriac, but they are [kept] to a minimum especially after Vatican II when they changed a lot of

> how the mass is said. [. . .] The flavor, if you want, of the Maronite masses has kept some Syriac in. It's to go back to our roots. And the liturgy itself, I think it's a wonderful liturgy. It's a fulfilling liturgy. I am very happy the way it's conducted. I attend the 11:30 mass which is English, Arabic and Syriac. So, it has all three flavors and I don't mind it. It's a little bit longer. It takes time to repeat things sometimes because if you say the gospel in two languages, obviously if the priest is going to say his sermon in two languages, it takes more time than one language. If you want a short mass, an English mass, come to the 9:30 mass. If you want a mass with flavor, come to the 11:30 mass.

Another parishioner is more adamant and wants Syriac to be more than just a "flavor." "I wish, actually, as a matter of fact I wish that they [. . .] can go back to the whole thing in Syriac. [. . .] I think we'll benefit a lot more if we go back to the language that spiritually, you know, to the language that Christ was speaking." "It's not easy language. But I'll be willing to [learn it] if they go back to the whole thing." A Lebanese Maronite man sees the loss of Syriac as part of the Church's movement through time and space: "We have now only a few paragraphs that are said in the Syriac language that was spoken by Jesus Christ in the past. Our mass used to be almost 100 percent said in Syriac, and now as time has passed, most of the mass is now said in Arabic. And then after that, now that we are in the States, it's said in English."

In the Antiochian parish, Father John says that when he does weddings, the bride and groom always ask, "*Abouna* [Father], please do the service in Arabic," even though neither speaks Arabic. The use of Arabic in the Church is also a link to the homeland for both recent immigrants and second- and third-generation Arab Americans who may have never been to the Middle East.[27]

But it is also more than part of an ancestral or homeland identity: it is what sets them apart from other Christian denominations. The Maronites and the Antiochians have a valid claim to the Holy Land through language, culture, and history. Consider the words of two non-Arab members of St. Mary's, one clergy and the other a lay leader. Even for a non-Arab member, the claim to an authentic ancient Christianity is salient:

> What I love about the Antiochian churches, and I'm so thankful that this is the church that my [dad] was ordained in, is because again it's scriptural [. . .] where were people first called Christians? In Antioch. I love this. This connection to Christianity, and there was a church established there at that time and now we have a patriarchate there. So I love that.

Another non-Arab member also sees a potent relation between the Arab Christian tradition here and the more ancient version: "Well, I think to me that it plays out at Easter time, for Orthodox people because [. . .] during those services during [Holy Week] there is a service everyday leading up to the resurrection. There are some awfully emotional services and I think people really empathize with being there, with really being there with the string of people that were there. So I think there's a lot of emotion in this church and faith unlike some of the more western, distant traditions from the Holy land." "I think they view themselves as being relatives of the apostles [laughs], literally." He laughs, "[Father John] probably thinks he is closer to Christ than I am because of where he came from."

Leadership and Authority

The authority of the priest in the Maronite and Orthodox faiths is threefold. In the Orthodox Church he is canonically the only person who can preside over a Divine Liturgy, other than a bishop. Without the priest, the types of worship services that can be conducted are severely limited. A deacon can lead some services when the priest is absent but cannot preside over the consecration of the Eucharist, the most important element of the liturgy or mass. Second, the priest in the Orthodox Church is charged with maintaining the succession of ordination handed down from St. Peter. In the Maronite Church, as we have seen, the priest is expected to uphold the use of Syriac and also carry on the foundations of the faith laid down by St. Maron in fifth-century Lebanon. Finally, as we explore more fully in the following section on scriptures, since the liturgy is inherently scriptural, the priest is seen as the bearer of the Word of God to the people.

The role of the priest and the deacons is much more than just orchestrating the Sunday services, according to Father David. "So each of us has a role to play. . . . And they're living liturgical roles." Father David goes on to say that everybody is involved in bringing the liturgy to life:

> If you look at the Antiochian tradition, the Maronite tradition, you would see that the priest has a role to play, but so does the deacon and the subdeacon. [. . .] And the laity plays a unique role. The congregation is much more responsive, they have much more of a prayer life than just sitting there. They're not an audience in a theater. They are active participants.

But the priest is, above all other roles, the one who makes the liturgy work; in fact, the only one who can. "He is a leader of the community, but he's

also the one who is chosen by the bishop to represent him and also to transform, as it were, the bread and the wine into the body and blood of Christ, and that can only be done by him." Father David adds that the Eastern-rite churches, "unlike the Roman Church, do not have a priest-less liturgy." Even a lay leader in the Maronite Church who has been an active member for over a half a century knows how limiting the absence of a priest can be: "Everything we do, we have that done by a member of the clergy." As a young Orthodox congregant, Sara, quipped, "Like having church on Sunday without Father John, that would never happen."

The priest is an important role model for parishioners especially because he is human and fallible. It is also easier to accept him as a person. Hoda says, "A lot of people, they see the priest as God. And that's something very wrong because the priest is, while the priest is a holy person, he's a regular man just like you and me and he has [his] own mistakes. So once you look at the priest as holy and [as] God, when he makes a mistake that makes you resent him." But if you see the priest more as a "disciple on earth, the sooner you will realize that they're human, the better you understand them."

Many interlocutors in both faith traditions used the language of familial ties to discuss their view of the role of the priest, or their relationship with him. One Maronite woman says, "[F]or us the patriarch is not simply the head of the Maronite Church, he's the spiritual father. And you don't refuse your father's requests. And it's very much thought of in that light." An Orthodox parishioner sees Father John not only as a connection to the word of God, but to his homeland and the ancient Christianity. "Oh yes," he says of Father John's role, "it has more importance here because we are far away from the Holy Land and the greatest thing that we have with us is Father John."

The Orthodox priest envisions his role in much the same way the Maronite priest does. Father John, for example, uses the same idea about "living the liturgical role" that Father David espouses. Father John says of priests, "we live the scripture, because when I stand up on Sunday and I will preach my homily, I base it on the scripture. So it is a living dynamic within the model of the church."

So far we have explored the space of the church and the cultural and religious identities of the Lebanese Maronite Catholics and the predominantly Lebanese, Palestinian, and Jordanian Antiochian Orthodox communities of greater Detroit. Each of these subcategories has been explored with an eye to the transnational nature of these religious communities. This was not our forcing a theoretical framework on the words and ideas

of our many interlocutors. Instead, we simply recognized, through our ethnographic work within these faiths, that the geographical and cultural divide between America and the Arab region played a real role in how they located themselves religiously and culturally. Now, we focus on the practice of reading and engaging with scriptures among the Maronite Catholics and Antiochian Orthodox. Even here, we found that the transnational positions of these communities was borne out of their engagement with scriptures, whether in liturgy or mass or during their own personal readings of the Bible.

Scriptural Readings

In drawing the distinction between Catholic and Protestant churches, it is almost a truism that the members of Catholic churches do not know their scripture and are not well versed in the Bible or do not have a personal relationship with it because they rely instead on a highly structured, ritualized mass or liturgy led by an ordained priest. Many of our respondents, especially the clergy or lay leaders, elaborated on this perceived lack of scriptural connection in the Orthodox and Catholic faiths. They recognized the anxiety among the congregants within their own parishes, many of whom do not believe that they know the Bible well enough. What we eventually found is that the members of both faith traditions are not only exposed to scriptures at every church service but that scriptures play an active role in both their liturgical experience, as they recite and memorize scriptures, and in their personal lives. As Father David, Father John, and Subdeacon Michael pointed out, "[T]he people just don't know that they know it."

Both the Orthodox Divine Liturgy and the Maronite mass consist almost wholly of biblical references.[28] St. Mary's offered an eight-week class called Understanding the Divine Liturgy in which parishioners explored the scriptural underpinnings of the major parts of the liturgy. For example, the faithful learned that the prayers of the Anaphora and the Consecration, which are the prayers during the preparation of the Eucharist, are taken word for word from Bible passages. "Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you for the forgiveness of sins," which the priest chants as he lifts up the bread, is taken from 1 Corinthians 11:24. Father John and Deacon Mark led the weekly class, which averaged about ten adult attendees. A mixed crowd of Arab immigrants, non-Arab converts, and second- and third-generation Lebanese American parishioners explored just how scriptural their faith

really was. The few who attended this class found out what Orthodox and Maronite clergy already know: that the Church is scriptural and not some kind of polar opposite of the Protestant tradition when it comes to scriptural engagement. An Orthodox subdeacon stated it most effectively:

> In comparison to the Protestant churches, we don't memorize the Bible as much, word for word, know which verse says what. But if you look at our liturgy and I think that [it] is the ultimate expression of Christian worship. Why is that? Because it combines church history and scripture and dogma and spirituality and every aspect of being a Christian; it combines in our divine liturgy. In the liturgy, you find a lot of scripture but I don't think our people know that. I don't think they know where a lot of our lines come from.

Part of the goal of an educational opportunity such as the Understanding the Divine Liturgy class, is to change that perception.

The Orthodox view of the relationship of scripture to church is actually not relational at all. Both Father John and Deacon Elias, a long-serving immigrant deacon known in the church for his personal connections to the scriptures, are emphatic that you cannot discuss "scriptures" as if they are separate from "the Church." Deacon Elias explains extemporaneously, but in a manner showing the amount of time he has spent ruminating on these ideas:

> In one way, I think scripture can only be understood in the confinement of the church. So when we talk about church, we talk about scripture, we talk about worship, spirituality and the church in a way. It is called a holy tradition. So they are inseparable, but the church in our view have [separated them]—the scriptures was produced in the church and by the church and in the early days, it was for the church. [. . .] An Orthodox cannot be defined only in relationship with the Bible or the scripture. You have to have that membership in the totality of the body of the church. We see the Divine Liturgy as scripture, it's mostly taken from the book of Revelation, the worship . . . our church is designed as a temple. It is the Holy of Holies but we don't offer a blood sacrifice; we offer bread and wine which is a bloodless sacrifice. But the danger when you say it's only scripture, you've taken away the other . . . the body from it.

At our first meeting with Father John, when we were explaining the nature of the project and the types of questions we would be asking, he interrupted and interjected his own analysis of the our questions, and in doing

so uncovered a new manner of approaching the topic. He said that he was concerned that the questions did not apply to the Orthodox context because "there is no such thing as religious scripture." Elaborating on such a seemingly odd declaration, he explained that Orthodoxy is about "living scripture" and living the scripture. Scripture is not separate from the church. We must not look at it in a Protestant manner, he said.

Remember the earlier discussion in the "Authenticity" section on the role of the priest as an authority and a direct connection to Jesus and the Apostles. It is the liturgical basis on scripture and the priest's solitary authority to enact that liturgy or mass, which further solidifies his place as the light and life of each parish. As one Orthodox parishioner stated, "For me, [scriptures] come through the priest. We have a lot of trust in him and we just try and he passes down the Bible to us when he tries to connect to people's lives. We don't really [need] to read bible—I wouldn't understand it." Unlike most Protestant sects, the laity have a much more passive role in the service, but their presence is utterly important, as each congregant is "living their liturgical role," as Father David stated so eloquently. The members are usually unaware of how scriptural they are being just by going to liturgy and reciting the Nicene Creed, every line of which is a direct reference to scripture.

So, even though the stereotype of Orthodox and Catholic parishioners is that they are unversed in the Bible and lack a personal relationship with the scriptures, our research shows that this is an unfair and untrue depiction. This chapter will show that the scriptures are the foundation of the liturgy, which is the heart of the faith. It is at the liturgy where all congregants gather to hear the Word and reflect on current events, including homeland crises, through the homily. The liturgy is also an important space through which to experience their cultural identity through the use of native and ancient languages, such as Arabic and Syriac. This is especially significant for parishioners who do not speak these languages but still love hearing scripture recited in them. Further, the parishioners take scriptural passages and messages, either from their own personal Bible reading or from the liturgy, Gospel readings, or the homily, and use it as guidance for their lives.

Personal Application of Scriptures

Most of the parishioners tended to define scriptures as "God's word" or the words of Christ as written in the Bible. The clergy, though, understand the deeper connection between "the church" and "scriptures." But the clergy and parishioners are on the same page in that most of the respondents said

that they tended to experience scriptures primarily through the liturgy in church each Sunday. For many, this was more important in their lives than reading the Bible—although church leaders and some members said they do read the Bible or attend some sort of Bible study. The interlocutors say that the Orthodox and Maronite faiths are very oral, and that they most often encounter scriptures through the priest as he conducts the liturgy. Regardless of how they encountered them, whether through church services or private Bible reading, scriptures were critical to people's everyday lives because they provided them with moral guidelines about how to be a good person and how to live like Jesus on earth. The scriptures were critical to people's engagements with everyday life—whether in terms of raising kids or living a healthy life in fast-paced America. Because they are members of transnational religio-cultural groups, the scriptures also played a role in their engagements with structural issues, such as racism, the targeting of Arab Americans after 9/11, as well as the forces of war and US imperial projects in their homelands (particularly in Lebanon, Palestine, and Iraq). The scriptures were highly significant sites through which people sought comfort in relationship to war in Lebanon. It helped them forgive others when loved ones were killed, and to be compassionate during times of intense hatred and war.

Both the Maronites of greater Detroit, as a congregation of Lebanese immigrants and Lebanese Americans, and the Orthodox, as predominately of Palestinian and Lebanese heritage, have learned to deal with crisis and tragedy both in the United States after 9/11 and in the homeland during decades of civil war in Lebanon and war and occupation in Palestine. The duration of our research within these communities also brought us into contact with them following the Israeli war with Lebanon in summer 2006, and encompassed the siege on Gaza in winter 2008/09. We were able to see first-hand how these communities mobilized support for their families and church families here and abroad though prayer and the collection of donations at church. Further, as we will explore below, the liturgy on Sunday became a space where everyone would gather to hear the latest news and to hear a homily that typically connected that day's Gospel reading to the crisis. It was through scripture and the church's teachings that most of interlocutors searched for comfort during times of homeland and hostland crisis. A pertinent example of this comes from the Maronite Catholic tradition, as told by Father David:

> One of the stories that is very big in the Syriac world is the five wise men and five foolish virgins. That story's always been a very big one in the Middle

East, not just with Maronites, but with many in the Syriac world because constant vigilance meant something to them. Because living in terror, living in fear for their lives made them very conscious of being constantly ready and being prepared. So many of those parables having to do with the end times, having to do with preparedness, have taken on a central meaning in their lives. Among many of the things they quote is "keep your lamp ready."

Well, that's scripture. They may not identify with it directly, but that is sacred scripture.

Following 9/11, a number of the parishioners looked to their Christian faith for guidance. Though they may not have been the victims of any sort of overt discrimination—in fact none of our interlocutors said that they were—they dealt with a sense of loss. Hoda, for example, said that the Church

helps you be compassionate about others and I think that's after, where the 9/11 happened, you feel the pain of other people. When you're so religious and so into God and the love of God, I think you see through the eyes of God. So you pray more for the people. [. . .] I came from a war [in Lebanon]. Yeah, I lived in the war for a while and I am so thankful that I am here.

Barbara looked to her faith to try to find the kind of compassion and understanding that Hoda described:

Well, being an Arab American, and not being from there originally, being born here, I love America, but I do feel a connection because that's where my grandparents and great-grandparents were from. I did lose a cousin in the World Trade Center, so it hit home for us. But you can't hold all Arabs responsible for the acts of a few. They say it was in the name of God, but it's not really in the name of God. So, I have difficulty with not understanding what the Muslim religion is. But then, Father had some Bible studies. He brings things more clearly and we were going to do something on the various religions so that we have a better understanding of it. I guess it hurt that people looked at Arab Americans in that way. But, we are Americans, we are Arabs and we are Americans and we need to unite.

The idea of peace above all else was frequently cited by our interlocutors. Even during times of extreme violence, such as the Israeli siege on Gaza in December 2008 and January 2009, the priest of the mostly Palestinian

and Lebanese St. Mary's preached peace and understanding during his sermons:

> We gather on the first Sunday of the New Year to pray as a community. We gather with a heaviness of heart and mind and soul that the world once again is at war. And this war is back home. Those who are powerful claim self-defense and those that are occupied claim a sense of humiliation. I do not know if the gun can solve this conflict. It is when the world will stand up to defend what is right. A child is a child . . . whether Jew or Palestinian.

Remembering the recent violence in Lebanon, Fouad, a young immigrant Maronite, credits the church for trying to "keep everything in perspective." "You have people that want peace and you have people that don't want peace. You have people who wanted to be without war and people that want war . . . So basically the church's position is pray for peace and pray that people have the common sense and hopefully they do and not start wars for stupid reasons or whatever reasons you know."

"I don't know if you know a lot about Lebanon," begins Adele, a Maronite immigrant and active choir member:

> We had a war and a lot of Christians were hurt by others. Somehow we had the war of others on our country. So, we were divided; Muslim against Christian—for a while, not for too long. Some people killed my uncle in the village. So when we came back, we left the village for about three years. When we came back, everybody [was] carrying bitterness and hatred toward each other from my dad's family and for the other's family inside our village. But, I've only always felt I'm not supposed to offend anybody. I want to forgive everybody around me.

What is interesting about Adele's story is that it was most likely sparked by that day's liturgy in which Father David spoke about forgiveness within the "Middle Eastern culture." He quipped that "we of the Middle East" will recall who wronged our great-grandfather, and carry a grudge about it. Adele's internalization of this message shows how the delivery of scripture through liturgy, in the form of recited prayers or homilies, can and does have a very personal effect on the parishioners. As Rita, an Orthodox woman says, "The liturgy helps me to live healthy, make the right choices, and learn through the sermon. It's important to me to pray with the community."

Another aspect of the personal connection to scripture is that many of the parishioners did not separate scriptures, church, and their own lives, but instead spoke of these elements as being interwoven. Nabil, a prominent physician and active member of the Maronite community relays his view of the interconnectedness of church, scripture, and life: "Scriptures are a part of the church. Without scriptures you have no church. The church bases its beliefs and its sermons and its homilies and everything else on the scriptures. It plays a role in my life every day. I do not go to sleep once without saying my prayers. I teach that to my children."

Speaking from a priest's position, Father John similarly views the church, scripture, and the parishioner as one, interconnected system:

> We live the scripture because when I stand up on Sunday and I preach my homily, I base it on the scripture. So it is a living dynamic within the model of the church. So when I would say that the Holy Church for example on Sunday, I remind the people that our Holy Church assigned readings from scripture after Easter to explain about the awesomeness of God, of renewal of man, the healing, the removal of doubt, the power that comes with the risen Lord. That's the way it fuels one's own faith. So it is not a detached relationship . . . it is like your body . . . Scripture can be one of the organisms.

Liturgy as Scripture

For both the Maronites and the Orthodox, the liturgy is the center of their faith. Deacon Mark insists that "nothing could happen unless there was liturgy. Everything we do, and it's on a daily basis, is all in relation to our communing with God, to our liturgy, to our worship of God and to our encounter with Christ. That happens on Sunday." The liturgy is not only the one time when everyone convenes together; it also holds all the key prayers, such as the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, and is the only context in which communion or the Eucharist can be celebrated. The liturgy in both traditions is also essentially scriptural. As Father David articulates, "Our Maronite Liturgy is like most Eastern Catholic and Orthodox Liturgies, [and] is based very heavily upon the Sacred Scriptures. Many prayers can be traced back directly to either the Old or New Testament Scriptures. The Anaphora of St. James Brother of the Lord goes so far as to cite scriptural references in its margins. Forming liturgical prayers around the Scriptures is pretty much a standard practice throughout the Eastern Church traditions." Though many parishioners do not realize it, the words and rituals of the liturgy are either based on biblical passages

or reference biblical events. While many outsiders tend to peg Antiochian Orthodox and Catholics as being less knowledgeable about the Bible or scriptures because it seems there is less emphasis on individual reading and understanding of scripture, the Maronite and Antiochian Orthodox clergy know that this charge is misleading. The liturgy is also the site of the weekly homily or sermon. It is in this expository opening in the very structured and ritualized liturgical service that the priest is given a chance to connect that day's epistle or gospel reading to current events or contemporary trends. In the Maronite and Antiochian Orthodox churches of greater Detroit, these sermons typically become a space in which to discuss crises in the homeland.

So what we see, as we have explored in the previous sections of this chapter, is that Maronite and Arab Christians do use scripture, whether from personal Bible reading or attendance at liturgy and other church services, to negotiate their faith and its relation to their own lives. Their faith is especially important when homeland crises, past or present, are involved. As members of transnational religions, they have the double duty of applying their faith to their lives in America, as well as taking into consideration their ongoing connection to crises in the homeland, which is also the Holy Land.

The liturgy, as scripture and as a time for parishioners to convene, is a uniting factor in the American context. When asked whether there would be anything left for congregants if you removed the liturgy, Father David responds:

> We would say in this country, no, because for many of us, our experience, the whole experience of the Maronite tradition is based on liturgy. So our bishop would say our liturgy has become our life, our life has become a liturgy. So for us the liturgy becomes—is central importance. And while in Lebanon they had the *ethnic* to hold them together, here we don't, because our church is made up of Irish, Italians, we have blacks, African Americans [. . .] they're all Americans. And so for them, liturgy becomes a central uniting factor. And for most of us American-born, it is also.

Muslims from the Arab Region

We conducted research at the Islamic Center of Claremont (ICC), one of the most active Muslim communities in Southern California. Our research entailed in-depth interviews with six men and six women, including

three teachers of Arabic and Islamic studies and four community leaders. College students from the Arabian Gulf who were looking for a place of worship in 1984 founded this mosque. It currently serves nearly ten thousand Muslims, approximately 75 percent of whom are Arab immigrants. Twenty-five percent are non-Arab. The mosque is geared primarily toward immigrants, and specifically those of Arab descent. One interlocutor stated, "This is probably the most Arab mosque around here." It is a mixed-generation group. Approximately 90 percent of the adults are immigrants. During Friday prayers, the mosque receives between 500 and 600 worshippers, a number far beyond what this small mosque originally planned to accommodate.

The Islamic gatherings, lectures and services are conducted at the ICC in English and Arabic depending on the targeted audience. The ICC Imam is from Egypt. He studied the Islamic sciences and came to the United States specifically to take the position of Imam at the ICC. However, because he does not have a high command of English, the ICC receives visiting Imams to deliver the Friday prayer *Khutbah,* or "lecture," instead. In many cases the visiting Imam is not a trained Islamic scholar but a lay Muslim who has acquired some knowledge of the Islamic sciences. Divine grace and mercy emanates from the remembrance of God and the scriptural readings themselves, not from the Imam.

The ICC offers a full-time school for Muslim children. It conducts academic instruction in accordance with the standards set forth by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Along with the core subjects, which are taught in English, students also receive instruction in Arabic, Qur'an, and Islamic Studies. One interlocutor stated that many children in the community maintain the ability to speak in Arabic and in English. A wall at the school is painted with images of Muslim children and words that read: "I am proud to be an American Muslim."

First and foremost, our interlocutors spoke about the mosque as the most crucial place in their lives for practicing spirituality and achieving religious education. It is a place where people can go to conduct their five daily prayers (one of the five pillars of Islam). It is a place where people come together in weekly group gatherings for the pursuit of Islamic knowledge, or *Halaqas*. *Halaqas* are conducted in Arabic and English for different age groups. There are youth groups, women's groups, and groups for adult men and women. People also come to the mosque to memorize the Qur'an together.

The mosque also works as what Arjun Appadurai theorizes as a diasporic public sphere with its own specific articulations of collective

consciousness and transnational connection (Appadurai 1996). It is the space where interlocutors make and remake community in the diaspora. Interlocutors tend to attend this particular mosque because most people there speak Arabic and support Arab cultural norms with which they are familiar. In their countries of origin, people do not tend to celebrate *Eid al-Fitr*, an important Islamic holiday, at their mosque. In Claremont, California, however, people do tend to celebrate Eid at their local mosque. Similarly, they attend a communal observances of breaking of fast during Ramadan and participate in a range of social activities, such as skit performances. Overall, people view the mosque as a safe place for kids to socialize and a crucial site of community building in the United States. Some interlocutors' families lived in neighborhoods with few Arabs and/or Muslims nearby. They felt strongly that the mosque was where they came for community. As Aisha, one interlocutor put it,

> We were always at the *masjid* for *salah,* for Ramadan, *iftars*, *Eid* prayers, carnivals, weddings, you name it. That was where we had most of our festivals. We had some non-Muslim friends as children, but most of them were people we met at the *masjid*. It was the most important aspect of my life. It was the community I grew up in.

Another interlocutor expressed the fluidity of the boundaries between spirituality and religion and community life when she said: "Actually, we live in Islam. It's not like there is regular life and then there is Islam."

Building community with and through the mosque in ways that appeal to second-generation youth requires community leaders to incorporate what they perceive to be American forms of sociability into their events. Leaders teach Islam through play and activities such as basketball on Saturdays.

What scripturalizing practices/rituals are in evidence in this community? Who are the principal actors and authority figures in relationship to scripturalizing practices in this community?

The most crucial scripturalizing practice in this community relates to the Qur'an. Muslim scholars are the principal actors and authority figures in relationship to the Qur'an. Our interlocutors commit to learning and engaging with the Qur'an as they simultaneously negotiate racist/Islamophobic perceptions of the Qur'an and Islamic fundamentalism in US society. Interlocutors view the Qur'an as the most critical source of knowledge about Islam. The Qur'an, they explain, transcends any geographic

or cultural location. They add that knowledge about the Qur'an and the Hadith is the most essential aspect of Islam and that these are the most crucial scriptural sources. Every interlocutor engages with the Qur'an in everyday life and seeks personal guidance and insights from the Qur'an. They quote the Qur'an to represent their worldviews and life decisions. Yet they refrain from making exegetical interpretations, *fatwas* (decrees) on their own. They agree that this requires the training of a Muslim scholar, or *Alim*. Scholars' lineage or place of origin, they explain, did not determine whether or not they were qualified to interpret Islamic scriptures. Interlocutors explain that Muslims recognize scholars for their dedication to and knowledge of the scriptures, and they encourage and support legitimate objection to a scholars' opinions on *fatwas* and exegetical interpretations. They explain that some issues are open to interpretation while others are not. For example, monotheism is nonnegotiable. The Qur'an and Hadith are very clear on the oneness, the Divine Unity of God. However, issues of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) may have a variety of interpretations. At the same time, there are limits on what scholars can change. Several interlocutors explain that Islam does not support scholars to establish new *fatwas* if the situation does not call for it.

FAYZA: I think it's really important for someone to have extensive Islamic education and knowledge of Arabic to interpret the Qur'an. The Qur'an is not just an independent entity. It comes with the Hadith, the Tradition of the Prophet. Sometimes we superimpose our ideas on it.

ASHRAF: I definitely think that regular people and lay people should be able to interpret the scriptures. It's part of our religious duty to understand what God wants us to do. At the same time, I don't think it should be our religious duty to say that this is the correct answer or this is what God meant by this verse.

Overall, interlocutors explain that Islam supports the idea of lay Muslims seeking their own guidance from scriptures. This explains why some interlocutors read and study on their own without forming their own exegetical interpretations, but study the variety of interpretations and choose their own path. Some choose to go directly to specific sheikhs, scholars, or knowledgeable people with whom they feel comfortable.

While the scholars' place of origin did not determine their knowledge of Islam, it determined another crucial aspect of their credibility. Every interlocutor agreed that Islam places significant value on scholars' ability

to interpret Islamic scriptures in light of cultural problems and historical situations and contexts. Scholars, many explained, must be able to connect with their audiences. For example, a scholar from the Middle East cannot give religious advice or *fatwas* to Muslims living in the West without knowledge and understanding of Western culture and life.

MARWAN: I think there are different pressures facing each community and that obviously affects how they look at scriptures.

FAYZA: Now that there's more interaction with Western society, there's a different way of reading into the Qur'an. We notice different things in the Qur'an that perhaps we didn't notice before.

SALMA: Islam has always provided answers to the Muslims of India, Egypt, Mecca, and China. Everybody has their own problems that they used to bring back to the Qur'an. The Muslim scholars have always found answers to their questions. You could visit the Muslims in China and learn about their ways of life and you would find that they took the Islamic teachings and adapted them to their own needs.

MAZEN: I'm not going to listen to a person that lives in Egypt on whether we should vote in the United States or not. There are different understandings in terms of how scholars come up with these decisions.

Interlocutors agree that scholars are required to uphold excellent training in the Arabic language. They explained that this was because the Qur'an emerged within a context and knowledge of the Arabic language is crucial for grasping its Arab context and meanings. The general sentiment was that meaning is lost in translation. Classical Arabic is ever more very important to Islamic scholarship. This did not mean that any native speaker of Arabic qualified as a Muslim scholar. A Muslim scholar must study classical Arabic as a science.

TAHA: Speaking the language is something, and being proficient at the language is something else. I believe it's very hard if you don't speak the *language to understand what the prophet is* talking about. It has to do a lot with whether we speak Arabic well enough to understand what it really says. Sometimes I do the translation into English, and I find it very hard to get to the right meaning of what the sheikh is saying. It depends on the translator and how he translates it.

ASHRAF: Even memorizing the Qur'an doesn't really mean anything if you don't understand what you're reading.

MARWAN: Speaking Arabic is central to understanding the Qur'an. Every single bit of Arabic that I learn, I feel like I like the Qur'an more. It makes a huge difference in being able to have a relationship with the Qur'an. Progressive Muslims and these terrorists, a lot of them don't speak Arabic and say, "Oh, it says in the translation da da da da da da," and then they'll say this obviously means this and that's one of the big problems that people have; they're trying to do things on their own.

ASHRAF: I get really concerned when I see people who don't know Arabic, don't know the context of verse, and they'll come in and interpret the Qur'an in this way. This happens all of the time when it comes to issues of the *hijab* and issues of the Islamic covering. We have to talk about context, purpose and revelation. We have to talk about when it was revealed. We have to talk about what . . . the word meant at that time and how it was applied at that time.

Critiques of Orientalist scholars were woven throughout interlocutors' discussions about authenticity. Interlocutors question the sincerity and intention of Orientalists in their interpretation of Qur'an, Hadith, and Islam in general. Interlocutors are particularly suspicious of their motives as well as the accuracy of their scholarship and their credibility.

RAYAN: I think that the Western media is a big problem. Some people are sincere and some have this superior/inferior attitude when they go into it.

Engagements with Orientalism inspire many interlocutors to learn more about what they perceive to be true Islam. This allows them to respond to charges of Muslim backwardness or stereotypes about Muslim women's oppression.

FAYZA: Because there is so much negativity about how Islam treats women, lots of girls in America need to know what Islam really says about women. It was important for me to be reminded of how Islam deals with women. I wanted to know. . . . What are all of the sources, not just the ones that are always highlighted for us? What does Islam say, how are the women of the Prophet treated and what we can learn from them because the prophet says, "My companions are like stars, if you follow any one of them, you will be guided." So let's look at the women who lived at the time of the prophet. Read about them.

They were in the army, fighting in the army, one was pregnant and she was fighting alongside the Prophet. He looks to his right and she's defending him, alongside her husband and sons. When is it that women in America started joining the army?

ASHRAF: A lot of time their [Orientalists'] intentions are not genuine and you could definitely point that out through their writing Orientalists don't have the standards that Muslims are bounded by in terms of their interpretation of the Qur'an. We have to be ethical.

Many interlocutors are similarly critical of what they refer to as people who used scripture without correct guidance from scholars. These discussions ranged from critiques of what some referred to as liberals who attempt to instill new, Western, liberal ideals about homosexuality and mixed-gender prayers into Islam to critiques of the Bin Ladens and militant Muslim extremists. Interlocutors tend to paint either group as upholding a nonauthentic approach to Islamic thought and a lack of knowledge in the Arabic and Islamic sciences. Some interlocutors also critiqued Muslims who interpret Islam through cultural ideals. They explain that blurring the lines between religion and culture meant that they were not following God's words. They add that these Muslims were projecting untrue images of Islam to the outsider. Overall, the targets of their criticism are what they referred to as "unqualified" people who were scripturalizing through their words or actions in ways that do not reflect a true Islam.

AMAL: If scripture is misinterpreted it can give a whole different meaning. For example, when you have people reading that Muslims are told to kill the enemy wherever you find them. You have to be at least a sheikh or something. At least be fluent in Arabic or scholar, and not anti-Islam.

MARWAN: The problem with terrorists is that they are trying to interpret stuff on their own. They come up with these ideas; you've heard all the stupid things that they say. On the other side—you have progressive Muslims. They're looking at these books on their own and coming up with these crazy ideas. They're making the religion go to that way. But it should be the other way around. They have to conform to the religion.

Interlocutors spoke extensively about the term fundamentalism. They critiqued the way dominant US discourses attach it to Muslims as a way to legitimize the idea that all Muslims are terrorists. They articulated the

relationship between Islam and fundamentalism on their own terms. This entailed distinguishing the aspects of Islam are open to change and those that are not. Everyone agreed that the five pillars of Islam cannot be changed.

TAHA: Fundamentalism. Whenever I hear it on the radio and on the TV, it's attached to Islam. *They're* trying *to put a negative mark on Islam* as if Muslims stick to a rigid opinion and will not change their opini*on—that they are close[d]-minded*—I don't believe Islam is that way.

IMANI: Yes, Islam is fundamentalist on certain things. There are things in Islam that can't be changed like the five pillars of Islam—like there is no god except Allah and Muhammad is his final messenger or establishing the prayer, to establish the care, *and to establish your fasting* for Ramadan and do your *hajj*, if you can afford it, to Mecca.

ASHRAF: There's general knowledge in Islam that anyone can give you an answer for. Should we pray with our hands on top or hands on the bottom? Should we do this with our finger, point it up and down or should we do nothing with our finger? I think things of that matter are generally enough for any scholar can give you their opinion, their interpretation.

MAZEN: Islam gives you many ways to choose. You have the option to enter Islam or not to enter. After you become a Muslim and you want to pray, it is preferable to pray on time and as early of the time of the prayer, but there is an open arena for you to pray at your convenience. The *hijab* of the woman is fundamental because you have to wear a *hijab*, but the question could be, 'What color?', 'What kind of *hijab*?' It is up to you.

ASHRAF: I'm not going to listen to someone who is in Zimbabwe or Malaysia about whether we are allowed to buy homes in the United States based on interest or not. I would like that interpretation to come from over here. Certain rulings are going to change because of minority verses majority but there are those rulings in Islam that do not change no matter where you are. For example, the pillars of faith. Those things are essential beliefs of a Muslim that can never change and that can never be compromised.

FAYZA: Now that we have working women, does the woman have to contribute certain parts of her salary or does she have to give her husband all of her salary? Or, because Islam says, the woman can just keep her money to herself. This is just one example of where I see people wanting to look back to the scriptures. This is a new situation. I know we

have this idea that there is the right of the man to be obedient to his wife, but it's given to him only if he can provide for the family.... Muslims need to go back to the scriptures to see how we can interpret certain verses in the right way to have the right answers to upcoming situations. I feel our Muslim scholars today do not see exactly how certain answers in *fiqh* or jurisprudence do not take into consideration the side of the woman or what's good for her. They see it from the man's point of view and what's good for him.... Nowadays women are expected to work as both man and woman at the same time and they are not given the inner support by their husbands.... The Muslim scholars should state clearly that because of the changing times, women, if they are forced to work outside the home or [to] spend her money on the household then we should, by the same token, address the man, the husband, and it is your duty to help your wife at home.... I feel that these certain areas in the Islamic *fiqh* are still lacking.

What are the forms of expressiveness in relationship to which scripturalizing practices are carried out?

Interlocutors carry out their scripturalizing practices with and against their engagements with concepts of culture. They share in a commitment to create new forms of Muslim identity that differ from concepts and practices of Islam in their countries of origin—concepts that are wrapped up in ideals and practices of "Arab culture." Yet while they strive to practice an "Islam" devoid of "Arab culture," their religious community and life world are shaped very much by concepts and practices of Arab ethnicity and the distinct historical circumstances facing Arab immigrant communities. At the same time, while my interlocutors are working on disaggregating religion from culture, they maintain a commitment to understanding and interpreting Islam in a way that must be relevant to the cultural and historical context in which they live (the United States).

Interlocutors generally privilege a religious (Islamic) identity over a cultural (Arab) identity. Over and over, interviews critiqued nationalist identity. This critique is reflected in comments such as these:

AYMAN: If all people are from God and identity is based in religion then there is a sense of equality among humanity, as opposed to nationalism which remains the divisive element within humanity.

ASHRAF: I'm a Muslim if I'm in Lebanon, if I'm in America, if I'm in Egypt, if I'm in Africa.

MARWAN: The idea is that you're not part of a nationality—that all people are equal and from God, so you shouldn't really care about this whole Arab thing.

Interlocutors tend to share a critique of the way Arabs living in Arab countries practice Islam. They contend that they practice Islam in a cultural way rather than an Islamic way. They agree that the conditions of life in the United States—where Muslims are positioned as different and inferior—inspired them to value Islam more than it is valued in their countries of origin. They privilege what they perceive as the disaggregation of Islam from Arab culture.

MARWAN: In a lot of the Arab countries that are supposedly Muslim countries, the religion is actually less practiced than in a country like the United States where you're a minority. In the United States, you have an extra duty to represent your religion. A lot of Americans look to you to be a representative of Islam or a representative of the Muslims in general, so we end up with a deeper tie to our religion.

BASIL: Back home in Egypt, the people are raised as Muslims but they don't value what they have. When I came here I valued it more and more.

AMAL: Culture gets on my last nerves. When I went to Jordan last summer for my cousin's wedding and all the girls were saying to me, 'Why are you wearing *hijab*?' I said, 'I wear it all the time.' They said 'It's your cousin's wedding. You're going to wear it?' I realized that every time I go to a wedding of someone really closely related, a lot of people don't take the *hijab* seriously.

AMAL: Religion is important, but the problem with Arab Palestinians, Jordanians, is that culture plays too big of a role. Even I would think something is a religion thing and now that I'm growing up I realize that I don't really have to do that because it is not religious.

Second-generation young adults were more inclined toward disaggregating the categories Arab and Muslim than their immigrant counterparts. Their second-generation social location provides them with access to resources that were often unavailable to immigrants, including Islamic educational networks through their college campuses. Through these networks, they enter into approaches to Islam that are different from their parents' generation. This led most young adults to identify less with Arab culture than their parents. Some are more rigid in their Islamic practice and develop closer relationships to scriptures than their immigrant parents' generation.

Most interlocutors explain that their location in the United States is crucial to the way they understand the Qur'an and *Shariah* (body of Islamic religious law). They explain that issues that Muslims in the United States face are substantially different than those faced by Muslims living elsewhere. They overwhelmingly agree that Muslims should take into consideration the cultural context in which they live when determining how to approach and interpret scriptural authority. This is why they feel strongly that it is crucial that the scholars to whom they turn are knowledgeable about the United States and its cultural context.

ASHRAF: I definitely think that we need scholars that are American born. We can't fully rely on scholars that got the knowledge from back home then come back here and try to apply it. Hassan: It's different because the issues here are different than there. Daily life is totally different.

Interlocutors explain that in the United States, Islam provides a viable framework for negotiating the pressures of Americanization and assimilation. Many rely on Islam for guidance in grappling with aspects of US society that they do not support, including teen dating, alcohol, and stereotypical "American" norms related to the lives of adolescents and young adults. Many also explain that many families face deep challenges related to raising their children in the United States according to Qur'anic principles and norms. This leads some parents to become more religious in an effort to protect their children from the pressures of Americanization. Community leaders spend a great deal of time trying to make Islam appealing to young adults who "want to have their American identity and do the American thing." They promote what they perceive to be American activities in teaching Islam to younger generations.

TAHA, A COMMUNITY LEADER: The majority of our students know the Arabic language, but we live in America. Their school teaches regular American classes—English, science, and math. If you talk to the child in Arabic, 90% of the time the answer comes back in English.

AISHA, ALSO A COMMUNITY LEADER: A lot of the parents face difficulties with raising their children. They become naughty at a certain age and it's hard to control them. When they become teenagers, they're exposed to a lot of influences like drugs. Some Muslim kids actually got influenced by their peers outside the *Masjid* [mosque] and a lot of the parents have turned back and said, 'I want my kid to come

back to the Masjid, I want to start praying, I want my child to actually learn Qur'an.' A lot of parents become more religious as a result of that because they feel that this is the way they could maintain a healthy family life and society.

Amal: My mom was just saying the other day that the problems you find here [in the United States], you will never find there because of scriptures. Like teen pregnancy and homosexuality . . . because religion is so big. If someone does something, the smallest thing, it's a bigger deal because of scripture, because of Hadith, because of religion.

Ashraf: We moved here from Lebanon when I was a child. I started to get a little more Americanized and I started to fall into some of the mistakes of the American culture—the smoking weed, dressing bad fad and all of that garbage. After that, around junior and senior year in high school and beginning years in college, that's when I started to change my life a bit more. I went from not being religious at all to being too religious for my family. My mom, she just wanted to listen to KBIG in the car and I'd say, "That's *haraam* [forbidden], turn it off." I went from those two extremes.

Marwan: When I was growing up in high school, there was this constant pressure from your peers to go with the crowd, but Islam was a counterweight. It said, "Be different from them!" It was encouraging me to be different, not to be Americanized. If they shave, you grow your beard. If they wear such and such clothes, you wear something else. That definitely contributed to the whole not-being-American. I really saw things in black and white and thought," That's American; that's non-Islamic."

Taha: There are a lot of things in American society that are not acceptable from an Islamic perspective. It's just totally forbidden. When you come there, you find it is so easy to do the forbidden thing in our religion. You can go in any gas station and they sell alcohol. Our kids are growing up in that. We get engaged and married; we don't have girlfriends and boyfriends. This is a big challenge for our kids when they go to school and get called names if they don't have a girlfriend.

Interlocutors also share a critique about US policies related to Muslim people and Muslim majority countries. They share a sense that the United States upholds anti-Muslim policies and that there is a great deal of anti-Muslim racism or Islamophobia in the United States. They also speak about what they perceive to be their duty in responding to the forces of

racism and war. Many were forced to respond to Islamophobia in their everyday lives, especially in the aftermath of 9/11.

ASHRAF: When I first went to college, I thought I'd take a couple of classes, learn political science and that was about it. Then I learned that Islam and Muslims in this country are definitely not only a minority, but are at a weak point. We're looked upon in very negative ways. There's a lot of Islamophobia around. As a Muslim community that's standing up for social justice issues, we need a deeper level of how to convey the message to the general population other than just books. The general masses aren't into reading. We have to come up with new innovative ways, commercials, advertisements, things of that nature to convince people to take different stances. My understanding of the religious scriptures has pushed me into business and marketing so I can try to effect change in these ways.

MARWAN: I definitely don't think that they [Muslims] were just upset about people drawing cartoons. People are angry about Western domination. I actually had a big argument with a professor on almost the first day of a political science class about this and it was really funny because he just said, "Oh, that's just how Muslim people are, they're just, you know, 9/11, they don't have our values." A political science professor! I raised my hand and I tried to explain that it's not just about cartoons or a religious attitude; it's about all the stuff that's happening in the Muslim world. The U.S. supports dictatorships—Iraq, Palestine—there's no support for real democracy.

AISHA: I was about seven or eight years old when the Oklahoma bombings happened, and immediately Muslims were blamed for a terrorist act. Most of my mom's friends were afraid to go shopping, especially if they were wearing the *hijab*. Even if they weren't, they were still afraid because they're Muslim and they were afraid of being targeted. My mom was the only one to say, "I need to go shopping right now and get groceries so we're going." It was the second day after the Oklahoma bombings. I like to wear the scarf and I was wearing a t-shirt and jeans and totally childish clothing, but I had the scarf on my head. This one lady in the deli said, "Oh, look at those terrorists." She was sneering at us, so I ran to my mom. My mom wasn't scared and she said, "Excuse me ma'am, what are you talking about? My daughter heard you." My mom was not afraid. "We're not terrorists!" she said. "You've seen me bombing the place? I'm Muslim, but that's nothing to be made fun of."

MAYSA: The first time I went to public school was high school. It was the second week of school when 9/11 happened. I got a lot stares from my class on the day of 9/11 or 9/12. I wore the *hijab* and everything and so I was obviously Muslim but I remember people were going out and donating blood. We were discussing this in class and I said that my mom and her friend were going to donate blood. Some girls were staring at me like, "Are you serious? Your mom went to donate blood?" If there are victims out there, people who need blood, we'll donate blood. It's your duty because you need to save a life. It's as if you saved all humanity. I was making a speech in a debate and this one kid said, "When I grow up, I'm going to start a terrorist group. Won't you join me?" said, "I'm sorry. I'm Muslim, but I don't do that. You could start your own but I don't do that."

FAYZA: I have repeated debates with people about my *hijab*. It's like African Americans and racism. The American public doesn't like their black skin, so should they take it off? No, there's nothing they can do about it. It's the [US] culture that is not accepting, uneducated and has to change. I deliberately try to wear things that get them to think and to stop stereotyping, it is part of my obligation to continue in this vein and just change the way people think. If we change, and melt into society we are losing something not just for us, but to mankind—something that would have enriched them, and enriched their society, and even fixed it up and treated some of its social ills.

Despite the tendency toward disaggregating the categories Arab and Muslim, cultural identity persisted as an important signifier of identity for many interlocutors. That the mosque is predominantly Arab exemplifies the significance of Arab identity to our interlocutors. Many explained that they build community with other Arabs because they share the same language, and language is a source of unification. Yet over and over, they added that the Qur'an overpowers Arabic language or culture as a force of unification. Most interviewees revisit their countries of origin. Some return to their countries of origin to strengthen their Muslim identity.

ASHRAF: I understand I am an Arab American, it's not necessarily debatable. I identify myself as Muslim and if people ask me where I'm from, I say Lebanon.

TAHA: We have a scholar here whose main language is Arabic. It's the common nature of everybody to feel comfortable with him because he speaks Arabic.

Why do some in this community persist in relating to scriptures? What work do they make scriptures do for them?

Our interlocutors turn to the Qur'an for guidance related to every aspect of their everyday lives—from concepts of who they are to their worldview to matters of family, gender, and community development. This community has faced Islamophobia and racism more than ever before after the events of 9/11. Interlocutors turned to the Qur'an to challenge Islamophobic interpretations and understandings of Islam and the Qur'an.

Our interlocutors explained that the Qur'an and Hadith (or *sunnah*, "words of the prophet") are their primary modes of guidance on everyday life issues, ranging from theological to personal issues. People relied on their personal knowledge of God to craft their world views and perspectives on family life, community, politics, peace, and justice. Every interlocutor expressed their world views and perspectives through scriptures and every interlocutor quoted Qur'anic verses in Arabic or in the English meaning form that they had memorized. Interlocutors have generally been in awe of the Qur'an. For them, the Qur'an scripturalizes the Greatness of God. It entails scientific depictions, practical and political applications, and interpersonal or personal implications. Over and over, interlocutors used phrases such as, "Knowing the Qur'an is the happiest thing in my life." Interlocutors said that they conform their lives to scripture. One person stated, "The Qur'an is a goal I want to conform my life to." They read the Qur'an, memorize it, and strive to live directly by the Qur'an and its teachings. They interpret the Qur'an according to authoritative exegetical interpretations. Nearly every interlocutor had favorite Qur'anic passage or Hadith traditions that they recite by heart and tie into their worldview. Interlocutors shared the sense that the Qur'an always brings something new, even in cases where people have read the same chapter or passage many times. They tend to be inspired by the ways that new understandings repeatedly appear to the reader, listener, or devotee. In their view, the Qur'an is a living, dialectical form of scripture.

TAHA: The prophet Muhammad's mannerisms and behavior were the Qur'an itself. The life of the prophet, peace be upon him, it's a role model, even for the other prophets. We as Muslims in this community are doing our best to live the life of the prophet.

SALMA: I would try to live an Islamic way of life as God wanted us to live, based on the Qur'an and the *sunnah* of the prophet. Muhammad's our *sunnah*. It's everything in my life. I can't be who I am or think

that I am the person that I would like to be if I didn't have the spirituality that is based on the Qur'an and the *sunnah*—the Prophet, Peace Be Upon Him.

ASHRAF: I love it. Every time I open the Qur'an I find something completely new, completely different, even if I read the same verse over. That's one of the miracles of the Qur'an. There are so many lessons that you could derive from one story. I don't think I ever made the distinction between the word of God and what the scripture was. Hadith would be considered scripture since it's a bit more practical in the sense that it's more relative in terms of how we're supposed to be doing things and it's more applicable in terms of how you do things and the Qur'an, the word of god, is more like the general rules and regulations or the general structure of humanity. Everything that we do in the youth group was based on two things. Number one, the Qur'an; number two the *sunnah*, being basically the Hadith, the prophet or the sayings.

Our interlocutors related their identities or concepts of who they are directly to the Qur'an and Hadith. They similarly spoke about finding themselves in the scriptures and relating themselves to people mentioned in scripture. They shared a sense that even though the events they refer to took place at the time of the prophet and emerged out of a different historical context, they are similar to their own and can act as a means of direct guidance.

TAHA: I've been here since 1990 and the *masjid* (mosque) since the early 80s. I believe what gathers us all here together is the Qur'an. The sheikh is always busy with people's problems. If there are two people fighting over business, they come to the sheikh to solve the problem before the final option of going to the court. If there is divorce happening, it goes through the Islamic way before it reaches the court outside. I see a lot of marriages saved because of following the Qur'an. I see a lot of children protected because of following the Qur'an and the *sunnah* in daily life.

SALMA: The Qur'an and Hadith are a guide to us. If you buy a new car, you have to buy its manual that tells you how to fix it if something happens. Basically, we're human beings and we know exactly what's right and what's wrong. We may come up with some ideas on our own, but then we are fallible. So God sent us prophets and sent down scriptures to guide us and to tell us the dos and don'ts, and to tell us everything that he created in this world is for us to enjoy and

everything has been dedicated to our service as human beings. We are the masters of this world, but we should not forget that God is our master and worshiping him is our main goal.

AMAL: You always need a guide. And the Qur'an and the Hadith is a guide.

FAYZA: We were poor and he's the one that gives us our food and our nourishment. We were orphans and we couldn't even have existed. The Prophet turned to Allah, because he was his only means of support. All of us are like that. Our parents can help us in this world and the next, but ultimately we turn to Allah for help and guidance. When Allah wouldn't leave the Prophet—it feels like Allah is speaking to us.

ASHRAF: We'd also try to apply it in terms of where we're living, because in our understanding the Qur'an is the manual for life. It's the to-do guide for life. So we don't necessarily take it as just beautiful words that are said; it's more applicable, it's a lot more relevant.

AISHA: When I am really stressed or I feel depressed or overwhelmed, I tend to really want to read the Qur'an. I just want to set everything aside and read ten pages or more from the Qur'an and contemplate it. It really consoles me. As a child I had two favorite prophets: Yusuf and Suleiman. It's always consoling to read about the prophets' lives and see all the hardships they faced and how they trusted Allah. They still did their best and upheld their moral standards and maintained their ethical actions even though it might only bring more peer pressure or obstacles to them, but they're going to do what's right, no matter what. After every hardship, there is peace and so it's repeated. It reminds me that no matter what obstacles you're facing, they'll never persist forever.

SALMA: I want to say Qur'an is not only a book to read to worship Allah (SWT). This is a part of it, but Qur'an is also a guide to every single step in our life from when we wake up in the morning until we sleep at night. It has everything that we are supposed to do. Some people don't follow everything and I don't follow every single thing, but I still I know what I'm doing wrong.

AISHA: It is a part of our life. We can't separate between Qur'an and how we act every single moment in our life because it comes from the Qur'an. Qur'an is not just a word on book; it has a guide, like the law.

ASHRAF: In any class that I took in college, I always tried to relate it somehow to the Qur'an and the Hadith. In Biology class you learn amazing things and I'd always relate it. How do the sciences in the Qur'an relate to the Biology class that I'm taking right now? We

learned this new leadership tactic in business, so where do I see that throughout the prophet's life? How can I relate these things to the time of the prophet or how it is stated in the Qur'an? Is it different than how it is stated in the Qur'an or is it the same? It helps me understand where the Qur'an is coming from and where Allah is coming from. It helps me understand the topic at hand, 'cause I understood a lot more.

AMAL: I'm shocked sometimes how the answer to everything is always in the Qur'an and the Hadith. One Hadith that I really like is the one that says "Treat your brother how you would like to be treated," because if everyone followed that rule, our world would be perfect. There're other ones about oppression. If you're quiet about oppression then it will come back to you on the day of resurrection.

Interlocutors repeatedly referenced particular passages from the Qur'an. They were familiar with the name of the passage, its content, and its meaning.

ASHRAF: I'm remembering one verse in the Qur'an and Allah (SWT) says at the end when all creation will die. Islamically, we believe that, near the end of times, all creation will be dead and then resurrected to be judged. So at that time Allah (SWT), God says to the rest of everyone, "And to who is the kingdom, or who is the kinship or to whose the strength or the power today when all of you are deceased and pretty much dead at this point," just to emphasize the power of Allah SWT and that life is not yours for you to screw around in. The purpose of life is not to have fun. There is a deeper purpose in life and that Allah (SWT) establishes very clearly, *liman al-mulk al-yawm*. All of those people who are arrogant, for all of those people who thought they were something in this life. It's a very powerful statement to me and I love that very much.

AISHA: I like the verse, *Rijaloon Sadaq Allah Ma'Ahadoo Alai*. It refers to people who have been truthful to what they promised Allah in terms of supporting the *deen* [religion]. There's another verse Jesus says, "And who are my victorious ones?" His disciples tell him "We are your group, oh prophet." Basically they're saying to the Prophet Jesus that we are going to be your group of victorious ones. We're going to make you victorious in the long term. I try to make myself part of those people.

TAHA: The last verse in the third surah in the Qur'an, *surah ali Imran*, "Oh you who believe *isbiru* have patience as a group, *wasabiru* and have patience individually *warabitu* and whole fast together, so that you may be from the righteous ones." That verse always sticks in my mind because any time there is a calamity that happens, any time there is a situation that happens, that always brings things back into perspective and gives me that motivation, that optimism, that things are going to get better.

The Qur'an was particularly relevant to interlocutors' concepts and practices of family. Interlocutors' parents encouraged them to grant special value to the Qur'an regarding parent-child relationships and communication. Some parents encouraged daily Qur'an family reading time. Parents also stressed forms of behavior they stated were upheld in the Qur'an. Within many families, childhood and adolescent years include typical scenes of Qur'an reading and memorization. Some interlocutors also spoke about women's issues in light of the Qur'an. Many male scholars came across as gender-biased, and women interlocutors tended to take special interest in interpretations and reinterpretations of Qur'anic verses related to gender and women.

ASHRAF: Gender issues in the Qur'an have been one of those things that's been really pivotal point in my life. The basis of my whole relationship is religious scriptures: the Qur'an and the *sunnah*. Even when I'm talking to the sister, our whole conversation is about how we are going to implement the Qur'an and the *sunnah* in our lives. It's really so awesome because our connection, our relationship is not based on infatuation, it's not based on love, it's not based on how she dresses, things of that nature. It's based on Allah (SWT) and we came to the conclusion that a successful relationship should be based on something that's eternal and something that's perfect. What a better way to base a relationship other than God, Himself.

AMAL: I had this far cousin that died from the usage of drugs. He was afar. I didn't know him. You would never find these kinds of things there because religion means so much. If someone does even the smallest thing, it's a bigger deal, because of scripture, because of Hadith, because of religion.

AISHA: A lot of the parents are turning back and saying, 'I want my kid to come back to the masjid, I want to start praying, I want my child to actually learn Qur'an.' A lot of the parents become more religious

because they feel that this is how they could maintain a healthy family life and society. Religious scriptures . . . are a source of guidance to help you maintain a certain standard of healthy interaction with other people, keeping your family ties strong and not allowing the family to break up and just being productive members of society rather than just being a drug addict.

Interlocutors perceived the Qur'an as a unifier of community and essential to community formation. Community members settled disputes based on the authority and word of the Qur'an. In addition, normative ideals that structured the community were based upon the word of God. In this sense, the Qur'an was a living reality in the lives of our interlocutors.

TAHA: What gathers Muslims, whether they are Arab or non-Arab, is the Qur'an. It relates us all together. When I go to any other mosque around the area that doesn't speak Arabic, I feel very comfortable because we could disagree about a lot of things but when it comes to Qur'an, we all sit down and share the same *khutbah*. That's what unites us. I believe that the Qur'an and the Hadith are the leaders. Regardless of your culture, your original ethnicity, it's the Qur'an that makes us. It doesn't matter where you were born or live. The Qur'an is our master, our leader, what we all follow.

TAHA: Islam calls for unity. On many occasions, you find Islam talks about unity and being united, and I believe if we apply that rule unto ourselves we should be able to move forward, to be united, to be heard, instead of being counted as numbers.

Interlocutors shared a sense that dominant US discourses often misrepresent the Qur'an and Hadith. They also turned to the Qur'an and Hadith as crucial sites for coping with the aftermath of 9/11. Many shared stories of feeling recharged or revived when they turn to the Qur'an after reading Islamophobic news reports. Several also contended that tragedies such as the 9/11 attacks can inspire non-Muslims to become interested in reading the Qur'an or becoming Muslim. The Qur'an also provides guidance in evaluating life priorities and whether and to what extent persons should invest in particular issues over others.

ASHRAF: Nowadays, people can just jump online and easily find a misinterpretation of the Qur'an. They can find part of a random verse

like "Kill them where ever you find them," and then they'll start saying, "Oh, look at what this means: blah, blah, blah, blah…"

MAZEN: From October to next October after 9/11, 34,000 Americans accepted Islam. The Qur'an was the number one most read book in the United States and number one best seller for at least seven months after 9/11. One verse in the Qur'an that stuck in my mind was *ija ja'a nasr ullahi wal fath, wa ra'ayta al nassa yadkhulunah fi deenallahi afwaja*…. It's about the *nasr*, the victory of Allah, the opening—we saw people coming into the religion or coming in the *afwaja*, coming to the group in large numbers. Although what happened was a huge tragedy and mistake and whoever did it needed to be repaired in terms of justice and Muslims in the United States were hit hard because of it, we saw the exact opposite also happen. People started wanting to understand Islam and people started embracing Islam.

FAYZA: After reading a lot of newspapers and criticisms of Islam and Muslims, it made me want to know more. Sometimes when everything out there is negative, it makes you doubtful in a way. Whenever I'm at an all-time low, I have to go and read some Qur'an. Simply reading it gets me to a completely new place. It recharges me. When I go back and listen to what he says, I'm like, wow, this man wasn't even ordinary, like how wise the Hadith are, how soaked they are with meaning. When I share them with my non-Muslim friends, they're all blown away.

AISHA: The Qur'an is the most feminist book, especially considering its age, but also specifically looking into it, it causes us to probe certain questions that maybe in the United States aren't asked. Most American women have been intent on knowing what this is all about and I think that's important because the Orientalist perspective aims at weakening our belief in the Qur'an.

Conclusion

Interlocutors conceptualized their relationship to religion and scriptures with and through varied relationships to the concept of "Arab cultural identity" in ways that were very much entangled in the historical realities of anti-Arab racism, particularly in the aftermath of 9/11. Some Christians de-emphasized their relationship to Arab histories and cultures and overemphasized their Christian identity. This strategy provided a shield from anti-Arab racism, particularly in the aftermath of 9/11. Muslim

interlocutors did not have access to this privilege, as they could not escape the racialized connotations associated with Islam. Muslims tended to disaggregate the categories "Arab" from "Muslim" (ethnicity/nationality and religion) for different reasons. They tended to privilege the ideal of true Islam and the idea that cultural norms taint or cover up true Islam. At the same time, they agreed that the Muslim scholars to whom they turn should be knowledgeable about the particular cultural contexts in which they are practicing Islam. Different cultural contexts raise new issues and challenges for Muslims. For example, living in the United States raises the challenge of assimilation, racism, and Islamophobia.

Our research only scratches the surface of the multiple religious affiliations and practices and varying kinds of relationships to scriptures among Arab Americans. Yet our ethnographic focus on three specific religious communities provides a rich entry point into the urgent need to avoid simplistic generalizations about Arab Americans, religion, and scriptures. This is why we center our interlocutors' voices and privilege the ways that they speak about their faith and their relationship to scriptures. This approach helps us illustrate the complex, multidimensional, and historically contingent ways that Arab Americans relate to faith and scriptures. We caution our readers away from the one-dimensional conceptualizations of "Arabs" and "religion" that proliferate US government and media discourses. More provocatively, we highlight the need for specific understandings of the various religious sects within "Muslim" and "Christian" groupings from the Arab region. At the same time, we point to the need for historically situated research that takes seriously how diasporas from the Arab region relate to faith and scriptures with and through their engagements with the pressures of immigration, assimilation, racism, Orientalism, and US empire-building projects in the Arab region. Our research thus shows that on the one hand, there is a pressing need to take the internal diversity of Arab American religious practices and scriptural readings seriously. On the other hand, despite this diversity, Christians and Muslims from the Arab region have a shared history of engagement with US popular media and political discourses that lump all Arab Christians and Muslims together within a racialized, Orientalist discourse about terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism. While specific Muslim and Christian individuals and communities relate to dominant US discourses differently, religious practices, understandings, and spaces of worship continue to serve as key sites through which they negotiate cultural identity and their relationship to the US discourses and practices of race, assimilation, and war.

Notes

1. All interlocutors' names are replaced with pseudonyms, though we do identify which place of worship they represent. A complete list of interviews is included in the appendix.

2. See Schiller and Fouron (2001), for their definition of transnational social fields.

3. Their concepts of religious practice and scriptural engagements reflect what Gilroy (1993) refers to as maintaining identifications outside the US nation in order to live inside, with a difference.

4. For the full list of Muslim country population statistics, see the Pew Research Center's report *Mapping the Global Muslim Population* (2009).

5. Although Arab immigration to the United State predates the nineteenth century, the first significant group came to the United States in the 1880s. See Kayyali (2006) for a description of Arab immigration to the United States before 1880.

6. McAlister (2005) offers an overview of these post–World War II population movements, referring to Lebanese immigration in the context of the Lebanese civil war, Palestinian displacement to the United States in the context of Israeli occupation, the displacement of Iraqi refugees in the context of US-led war on Iraq, Yemeni immigration in the context of civil war in Yemen, and general worsening of economic conditions in the region during this period and beyond.

7. Said argues that Orientalism constructs a binary opposition between East and West that assumes that the two categories are mutually exclusive and that the "East" is different than and inferior to the "West." Orientalism, according to Said, has operated as a discursive, ideological justification for Western colonialism and imperialism in the Middle East (Said 1978).

8. The portrayal of Islam as an inherently violent religion has a long history. Said argues that throughout the Middle Ages and in the early part of the Renaissance in Europe, "Islam was believed to be a demonic religion of apostasy, blasphemy, and obscurity" and Mohammed was believed to be a false prophet and an agent of the devil (1981, 5).

9. Other organizations included Nadja: Women Concerned About the Middle East (1960); Pal-Aid International (1967); U.S. Organization for Medical and Educational Needs (1961); and the American Arab Association (1961).

10. See Rashid Khalidi (2004) for a more detailed analysis of growing US involvement in the Arab region.

11. Nixon's Operation Boulder in 1972 was the first in a string of FBI policies that entailed the harassment of Arabs and Arab Americans, particularly students, who were targeted by the state, and denied their constitutional rights, specifically those related to free speech. Based on presidential directives, it authorized the FBI to harass individuals of "Arabic speaking descent" with phone calls and visits without evidence of criminal activity based on the assumption that they may have a relationship with "terrorist activities" in Palestine and Israel (Akram 2002, 5). Also during the 1970s, several government agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Justice Department, and the Immigration Department carried out a wide-ranging campaign of investigation and surveillance of Arab Americans through tactics such as spying and wiretapping that were ordered from the White House under the guise of uncovering the activities of persons potentially involved in sabotage (Hussaini 1974). Also see the L.A. 8 case as an example

of US government harassment of Arab Americans activists. See Hasso (1987) for more information on the implications of this case for Arab Americans.

12. See, for example, the films *True Lies* (1994), *The Siege* (1998), *Back to the Future* II (1985), and *GI Jane* (1988).

13. In particular, see the essays in Min and Kim (2002), for examples of this among the different religions in Asian America. For Arab American accounts, see Philip M. Kayal (1975) and the essays in Hourani and Shehadi (1992).

14. See Naff (1985) and Orfalea (2006).

15. See Bawardi (2009) for an in-depth discussion of the political and cultural intersections early of Orthodox and Maronite communities in the United States.

16. See Ham (1997) and McGuire (1974) as two examples.

17. For a full discussion of the politicized engagement of these transnational religious communities see Stiffler (2010).

18. The mass was sponsored in part by "The Lebanese Forces and the Kataeb," a Maronite-led political party in Lebanon.

19. Beshir Gemayel's son had also just recently been assassinated.

20. This is especially apt in the religious context. Because Lebanon's government is built on a confessional system, religious leaders often take on politicized roles in Lebanon, and affiliation with one religious group tends to equate to support of a particular political viewpoint. Nubar Hovsepian (2007) writes in his entry to his edited volume, "The Lebanese were recognized not as citizens or members of civil society, but as members of the officially recognized confessions" (35).

21. See Stiffler (2010) for a lengthy theoretical and historical discussion about the role of food festivals in Arab Christian communities, specifically the Antiochian Orthodox.

22. The front of St. Sharbel is adorned with a gold cross with three bars, shaped like a cedar tree. This is sometimes referred to as "the Maronite cross," and its three horizontal bars are supposed to refer to the unity of the trinity, but it is also deliberately shaped like a cedar tree, which is a national symbol of Lebanon.

23. There is a slight difference in generations, though, where younger and more recent immigrants have less problem identifying as Arab or Arab American. A Maronite priest explains: "For most of us, we come from—we're second-, third-, fourth-generation American. We see ourselves very clearly as Lebanese Americans. And really are affected by the term Arab American. But newcomers have no problem with it, and we look at them and say, 'How could you accept that title?' Because if I said I was an Arab growing up, my grandfather would knock me across the room." Elie, a Lebanese immigrant in his twenties says, "I'm Arabic basically. I was raised in Lebanon. What defines the Arab world is [. . .] traditions and cultures. I was raised among those customs and traditions. I was raised, in Tripoli, around a lot of Muslim people, so we all share the same traditions and customs. So, I consider myself Arabic and a Christian."

24. One scholar of Arab American religions speaks of the religious identity of Arab Americans as being "primordial" (Kayal 2002). Though this may be a bit of a reduction, there is a sense that among the Christians we interviewed, religious faith does seem to be something that is seen as "inherited" from parents or ancestors. Also, within the Arab American community at large, people are often identified by their religion.

25. For more context about the role of religious identity in post-9/11 "Arab Detroit," see Howell and Jamal (2009).

26. Scholars are uncertain exactly when Christians would have had Arabic Bibles and Arabic liturgies, but it is widely believed that it could have been as early as the seventh century. See Thomas (2007).

27. We observed a potent example of the Arabic language's power as a liturgical language in the Antiochian Orthodox Church in America. There was an older Arab gentleman with a cane seated in the pew in front of us. Mostly everyone in the church was standing, as is customary, during Deacon Mark's reading of the Gospel in English, except for the elderly man in front of me, obviously not physically comfortable standing for long periods of time. As soon as Deacon Mark finished reading, Father John entered through the Great Doors and announced the Gospel reading in Arabic. The elderly gentleman stood right up, as if the sound of the scriptures in Arabic snapped him to attention. He stood for almost the entire reading.

28. See Constantine Nasr's *The Bible in the Liturgy* (1988) or his *Journey Through the Divine Liturgy* (1991), which trace the biblical underpinnings of every line of the Divine Liturgy. A letter in the preface of *The Bible in the Liturgy* from Metropolitan Philip Saliba, the leader of the Antiochian archdiocese of North American, reads, "Thus we Orthodox Christians chant the verses of the Bible each time we celebrate the Holy Liturgy and all divine services."

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