

**VARIABLES OF THE DIVINE LITURGY
PROPER TO SUNDAYS AND SPECIAL
FEAST DAYS**

AND

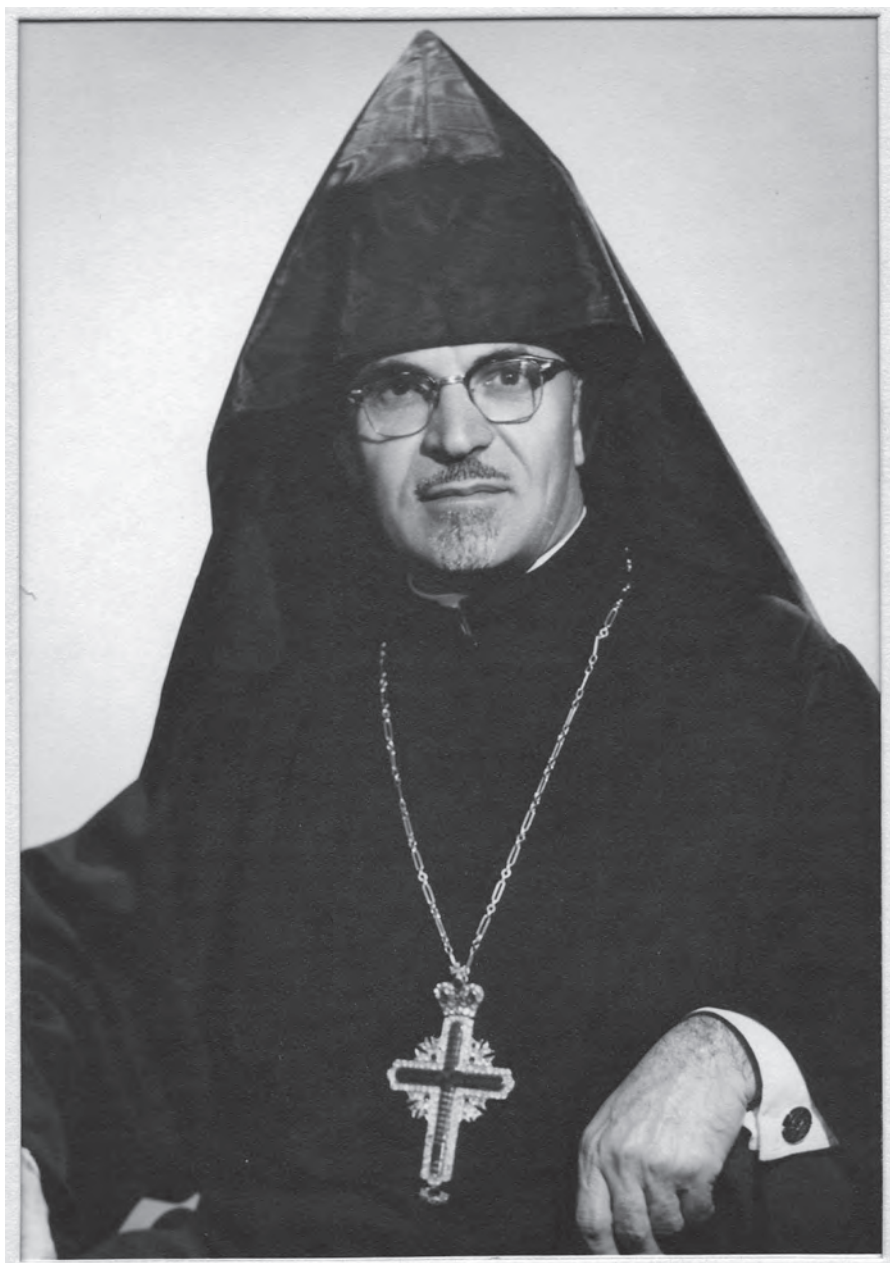
CHURCH KNOWLEDGE

Compiled and Edited
by

VERY REV. DIRAYR Dz. V. DERVISHIAN

By Order of
**His Eminence Archbishop
HOVNAN DERDERIAN**

Primate
Western Diocese of the Armenian Church
of North America



VERY REV. DIRAYR DZ V. DERVISHIAN
1909- 1989

BIOGRAPHY

The Very Rev. Dirayr Dz. Vartabed was a proficient, diligent and most organized priest, who has been a pillar in the Los Angeles County for thirty eight years.

Fr. Dervishian was born in Kharpert, Turkey, in 1909, one of three sons and two half - sisters, born to Sarkis and Varvara Dervishian, and was christened Hagop.

During the 1915 Armenian Genocide, young Hagop's father was killed, and he was separated from his family. Amid the turbulent subsequent years of the Genocide, Hagop's life was entrusted into various orphanages of Kharpert, Syria, Greece, Lebanon and Palestine.

At this specific time in his life, he received news that his mother, brother and half- sisters, whom he had believed to be dead, were alive and residing in Kharpert. Soon afterwards, Hagop took a trip to Kharpert and was reunited with his family.

Hagop entered the Armenian Theological Seminary of Jerusalem in 1925. After completing his studies, he was ordained a Deacon in 1928, by Patriarch Yeghishe Tourian, who was also one of his instructors.

Upon completion of his advance theological courses in the seminary (1932), His Beatitude Archbishop Torkom Kou-shakian ordained him a Celibate Priest and renamed him, Fr. Dirayr, which was the pen name of the renowned scholar, Patriarch Malachia Ormanian. Later in his life (1976) Fr. Dirayr published the index of Patriarch's "Azgabadoum".

In 1934 Fr. Dirayr completed his thesis entitled "The Epistle of St. James" and was elevated to the rank of Vartabed. As a member of the Brotherhood of St. James Monastery, he has held numerous positions in the Monastery, such as Chief Accountant and Financial Director of the Patriarchate and a member of the Central Administration for four years, Librarian of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem for two years and performed pastoral duties in the Armenian Church of Cairo, Egypt, for two years.

Fr. Dirayr was called to serve in the Holy Cross Armenian Church of Los Angeles from 1950 to 1953.

From 1953 to 1966 and again from 1972 to 1975, a total of sixteen years, Fr. Dirayr served as the ‘faithful shepherd’ of St. James Armenian Church of Los Angeles and St. Sarkis Armenian Church of East Los Angeles. During his pastorate both, St. James and St. Sarkis, went through many reforms. He was instrumental in many renovations. He initiated the St. James Publication, “Oshagan”, he was a member and chaired Diocesan Council. He also served on numerous committees in various capacities.

Fr. Dirayr served as the visiting clergyman for the Armenian Church in Vancouver, Canada from 1976-1981.

Being the conscientious priest that he was, retirement was impossible for him. When he was in town he faithfully attended the Holy Badarak at St. James Armenian Church of Los Angeles, assisting newly assigned parish priest, Fr. Arshag Khatchadourian.

In 1983, the 50th Anniversary of his ordination into the Sacred Order of Priesthood was celebrated at St. James Armenian Church of Los Angeles.

During the last several years, Fr. Dervishian had been working on the book entitled **“The Variables of Divine Liturgy Proper to Sundays and Various Feast Days and Church Knowledge”**.

Current publication is only an informative part of the original manuscript, which consists of close to two thousand pages.

The Very Rev. Fr. Dirayr Dz. Vartabed Dervishian departed from the earthly life and entered his eternal rest in 1989; however this work will assure his presence in our lives for centuries to come.

TABLE OF CONTENT

FOREWORD	12
FEAST OF THE THEOPHANY OR EPIPHANY	15
BISHOP SHNORK KALOUSTIAN “Saints and Sacraments” (pp. 61-63) (Christmas in the Armenian Church)	
DESCRIPTION OF A HISTORIC “JUR-ORHNEK”	18
(Blessing of Waters) BISHOP SHNORK KALOUSTIAN “Saints and Sacraments” (pp. 67-68)	
THE REAL SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRISTMAS	20
“The Armenian Guardian” January 1953 (pp. 5-8)	
CHRISTMASTIDE IN THE ARMENIAN CHURCH	25
BISHOP SHNORK KALOUSTIAN “Saints and Sacraments” (A retrospective description of Christmas preparations)	
THE ARMENIAN CHRISTMAS AND WHY IT FALLS ON JANUARY 6TH	30
“The Armenian Guardian” January 1956	
CHRISTMAS SHORT STORIES	34
ARCHBISHOP ELISEE TOURIAN Translated by H. B. N. “The Armenian Guardian” January 1953 (pp. 10-11, 15)	
ARMENIAN CHRISTMAS GREETINGS	38
“The Armenian Guardian” January 1953 (pp. 1-2)	
BAPTISM	40
ARCHBISHOP TIRAN NERSOYAN “The Order of Baptism” (pp. I-V)	
NOTES ON THE RITUAL OF BAPTISM	43
ARCHBISHOP TIRAN NERSOYAN “The Order of Baptism” (pp. 85-89)	

ARMENIA IN THE FIFTH CENTURY	49
ARCHBISHOP TIRAN NERSOYAN	
“The Armenian Guardian”	
October 1951, February 1962	
THE FORTY YOUNG MEN OF SEBASTIA	55
(KARASOON MANGOONK)	
PATRIARCH TORKOM KOUSHAKIAN	
“Soorbk yev Donk” (Saints and Feast Days)	
Translated from Armenian by DIRAYR V. DERVISHIAN	
LENT	57
DENNIS PAPAIZIAN	
“The Armenian Guardian” March 1956	
WHAT IS LENT?	60
“The Armenian Guardian” February 1958	
WHAT TO GIVE UP IN LENT	65
WORLD CHRISTIAN DIGEST	
“The Armenian Guardian” February 1961	
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (On Lent)	66
VERY REV. MESROB SEMERJIAN	
“The Armenian Guardian”	
February 1959, August 1963	
SUNDAY REST	69
VERY REV. MESROB SEMERJIAN	
“The Armenian Guardian”	
September 1950, January 1962	
THE GOLDEN CHAIN OF THE LENTEN SUNDAYS	71
VERY REV. SHNORK V. KALOUSTIAN	
“Hayastanyaitz Yegeghetzy” (Vol. XIV, No. 3)	
Translated from Armenian by DIRAYR V. DERVISHIAN	
“Oshagan” – 1955, No. 8-12	
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS	84
(On Requiem Services During Lent)	
VERY REV. MESROB SEMERJIAN	
“The Armenian Guardian” 1958 -1961	

HOLY WEEK IN JERUSALEM	89
A. V. P. “The Armenian Guardian” January 1956	
EASTER IN MY HOME TOWN	93
REV. ARTEN ASHJIAN “The Armenian Guardian” April 1957	
WHAT IS AN EASTER EGG?	97
DEACON HOVHANNES KASPARIAN “The Armenian Guardian” April 1960	
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (On Easter)	98
VERY REV. MESROB SEMERJIAN “The Armenian Guardian” 1961-64	
THE YEAR 1965 FOR ARMENIANS	100
PROFESSOR V. L. PARSECIAN “The Armenian Guardian” April 1965	
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (On Genocide)	109
VERY REV. MESROB SEMERJIAN “The Armenian Guardian” 1965-67	
THE MESSAGE OF ASCENSION	113
“The Armenian Guardian” May 1961	
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (On Ascension)	115
VERY REV. MESROB SEMERJIAN “The Armenian Guardian” April 1961	
PENTECOST – THE BIRTHDAY OF THE CHURCH	116
HAGOP NERSOYAN “The Armenian Guardian” May 1961	
THE CONVERSION OF ARMENIA	118
HAGOP NERSOYAN “A History of the Armenian Church”	
THE CONVERSION OF ARMENIA	123
HAGOP NERSOYAN (THE STORY OF SAINT GREGORY THE ENLIGHTENER) “A History of the Armenian Church” (Story V: pp. 33-40)	

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (On Holy Etchmiadzin) VERY REV. MESROB SEMERJIAN “The Armenian Guardian” June 1958	131
‘AND WE BELIEVE ONLY IN ONE ...HOLY CHURCH’ ARCHBISHOP TIRAN NERSOYAN Translated from “SION” by DEACON HOVHANNES KASPIAN “The Armenian Church” April 1958	133
THE ARMENIAN CHURCH PROFESSION OF FAITH PATRIARCH MALACHIA ORMANIAN Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, February 1962	141
WHY MUST I GO TO CHURCH? “The Armenian Guardian” January 1961 (p. 18)	145
MANNERS IN THE CHURCH Introduction, BOOKLET No. 5 Diocese of the Armenian Church of California, 1955	146
AN ORDINATION VERY REV. TORKOM MANOOGIAN	157
AMBASSADORS FOR CHIRST REV. DR. E.V.N. GOETCHIUS	159
ORDINATION SERVICE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH “The Armenian Guardian” April 1958	168
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (On Priesthood) VERY REV. MESROB SEMERJIAN “The Armenian Guardian” July-August 1959	170
THE HEAD AND HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH PAMPHLET No. 3 Diocese of the Armenian Church of California	172
SOME OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING REFORM IN THE ARMENIAN CHURCH ARCHBISHOP PAPKEN GULESSERIAN “The Armenian Church” November 1970	180

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH WITH OTHER CHRISTIAN CHURCHES	188
“The Torch Bearer” (Jahagir), (St. John Armenian Church, Detroit) January – March 1968, September – November 1968	
THE ANCIENT MONASTERIES OF ARMENIA	203
ARCHBISHOP SION MANOOGIAN “The Armenian Church” November 1960	
A BRIEF HISTORY OF ARMENIAN SEMINARIES	209
VERY REV. YEGHISHE GIZIRIAN “The Armenian Guardian” May 1952	
WHY SAY “AMEN”	217
“The Armenian Guardian” February 1962	
A BRIEF COMMENTARY ON THE DIVINE LITURGY	218
ARCHBISHOP TIRAN NERSOYAN “Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Apostolic Church” (pp. 293-312)	
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (On Divine Liturgy)	263
VERY REV. YEGHISHE GIZIRIAN “The Armenian Guardian” March 1970	
A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ARMENIAN PEOPLE	264
BOOKLET No. 1 Diocese of the Armenian Church of California, October 1953	
THE FIRST PRINTING OF THE HOLY BIBLE IN ARMENIAN AND ITS LABORERS	270
VERY REV. DIRAYR Dz. V. DERVISHIAN Los Angeles, California, October 1966 Booklet No. 11, “TERCENTENARY of the Printing of the First Armenian Bible”	
WHERE TO LOOK IN THE BIBLE	279
Religious Study course of St. Nersess Armenian Theological School (1964-1965) (pp. 12-15)	
ARMENIANS IN THE FAR EAST	282
BISHOP TERENIG POLADIAN “The Armenian Guardian” July-August 1959	

ARMENIAN MUSIC	286
REV. SHAHE ALTOUNIAN	
“The Digest”	
Association of Armenian Church Choirs of America	
Diocese of the Armenian Church of America	
1955-1956, Volume III	
NAVASSARD AND VARDAVAR	294
(The New Year’s Day in Pagan Armenia)	
DRTAD KRIKORIAN	
“The Armenian Guardian” January 1953	
THE FEASTS OF THE HOLY VIRGIN ACCORDING TO THE CALENDAR OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH	299
REV. ARNAK KASPARIAN	
“The Digest”, Vol. IV 1957-1958 pp. 42-44	
THE FEASTS OF THE VIRGIN MARY IN VARIOUS CHURCH CALENDARS	301
REV. ARNAK KASPARIAN	
“The Digest”, Vol. IV 1957-1958 pp. 42-44	
THE PLACE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY IN THE ARMENIAN CHURCH	303
REV. ARNAK KASPARIAN	
“The Digest” Vol. IV, 1957-1958	
THE MOST BLESSED AMONG WOMEN	318
REV. ARTEN ASHJIAN	
“The Armenian Guardian” August 1961	
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (On the Icon of Virgin Mary)	323
VERY REV. MESROB SEMERJIAN	
“The Armenian Guardian”	
December 1962, June 1969	
THE HOLY CROSS	325
BISHOP SHNORK KALOUSTIAN	
“Saints and Sacraments” (pp. 95-96)	
FEASTS OF THE HOLY CROSS	328

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (On Women in the Church)	332
VERY REV. MESROB SEMERJIAN “The Armenian Guardian” July-August 1958	
THE FEAST OF HOLY TRANSLATORS	335
VERY REV. YEGHISHE GIZIRIAN “The Armenian Guardian” October 1960	
THE SIGNIFICANCE AND THE PLACE OF SAINTS AND THE SAINTS OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH	339
DEACON HOVHANNES KASPARIAN “The Digest” Association of Armenian Church Choirs of America Diocese of the Armenian Church of America 1955-1956, Volume III	
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (On the Saints)	355
VERY REV. MESROB SEMERJIAN “The Armenian Guardian” November 1959 (p. 4)	
ANGELS	357
BISHOP SHNORK KALOUSTIAN “Saints and Sacraments”	
THE TWELVE APOSTLES	361
BISHOP SHNORK KALOUSTIAN “Saints and Sacraments”	
SAINT JAMES OF MEDZPIN	366
DEACON GARO PAPAIZIAN “The Armenian Guardian” March 1957	
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (On Evolution)	369
VERY REV. MESROB SEMERJIAN “The Armenian Guardian” September 1968	
CIRCA 1915 A.D. An Elegy: A celebration	371

FOREWORD

Dear reader, we are delighted to present to you a valuable treasure of the Armenian Apostolic Church which was hidden from us for almost a quarter of a century. This book, which is entitled **“The Variables of Divine Liturgy Proper to Sundays and Various Feast Days and Church Knowledge”** is a collection of writings of eminent clergy who served in the Armenian Apostolic Church mostly in the 20th century. Names such as Patriarch Malachia Ormanian, Coadjutor Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia Papken Gulesserian, Patriarch Elisee Tourian, Patriarch Torkom Koushakian, Patriarch Shnork Kalustian, Patriarch Torkom Manoogian, Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan, Bishop Terenig Poladian, Archbishop Yeghishe Gizirian, Very Rev. Mesrob Semerjian, are well known and much respected.

Thus, this marvelous collection is a product of a vision and incessant work of a true scholar and esteemed clergyman, the late Very Rev. Fr. Dirayr Dz. Vartabed Dervishian, who diligently compiled, translated and edited the valuable articles written in various periodicals, and books and organized them in accordance to our Church Calendar.

The book contains essential knowledge about our major feasts such as Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Transfiguration, the Feasts of Holy Cross and Virgin Mary. It also covers various important topics, such as: the Armenian faith, our Badarak, the issue of reform in the Armenian Church, the ecumenical relationships with other churches, the structure of our hierarchy, etc.

It is noteworthy to mention that existing publication is only a portion of the initial manuscript that was prepared by late Very Rev. Fr. Dirayr Dz. Vartabed Dervishian in 1989. The actual manuscript was mostly intended for clergy and consists of four major columns: texts are in Grabar (Classical Armenian), Western Armenian, English translation and transliteration. It includes more than two thousand pages of Mid-day Hymns (Jashoo Sharagans), Midday Lectons (Lesson of

Jashoo), Gospel Lessons, and etc. One can imagine how much effort and zeal was put in order to compile and edit such a magnificent masterpiece. Thus, considering the meticulous approach with which the Very Rev. Fr. Dirayr Dz. Vartabed Dervishian proceeded in compiling this book, I humbly consider the work as **Opus Magnificat**.

We praise the Lord that after such a long period of time the informative part of the book is finally published and is ready to enlighten the minds of much broader reader. The book will be very beneficial for the English - speaking individuals, Armenians and non- Armenians alike, who wish to broaden their knowledge on the Armenian Apostolic Church. It can be useful and a valuable companion to those who intend to follow the Armenian Church Calendar accordingly throughout the year, thus discovering the rich heritage of the first official Christian Church in the world.

I am more than convinced that the prayers of the very few individuals who knew about the existence of the book were the most helpful for the realization of our venture. Among the above mentioned individuals I would especially like to recognize Mrs. Araxie Dervishian Deukmedjian (Niece of late Very Rev. Fr. Dirayr Dz. Vartabed Dervishian), who was the pioneer of the project, and has done everything possible to make it a success. In my words of gratitude, I would also like to mention Miss Angel Shekerdjian, who graciously accepted Diocesan Primate, Archbishop Hovnan Derderian's request to retype and digitize the book. And most importantly I would like to thank Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, for making the publication possible. His guidance, support and, most importantly, patience were most obliging.

“Laborer is worthy of his reward” (Matthew 10:10). The words of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ are most appropriate for the immense work done by Very Rev. Fr. Dirayr Dz. Vartabed Dervishian. He indeed was the true laborer whose work not only benefits the faithful community, but above all glorifies the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I have no doubt that the Almighty will acknowledge it most properly,

since **“Each will be rewarded according to his own labor”**
(1 Corinthians 3:8).

I humbly feel that after running my own race I also received my personal prize (1 Corinthians 9:24) in the form of the present publication.

In Christ,

Hayk Madoyan
January 4, 2013

FEAST OF THE THEOPHANY OR EPIPHANY

(Christmas in the Armenian Church)

It is misleading to use the word “Christmas” for the Feast which the Armenian Church celebrates on the sixth of January all over the world, and which for reasons of convenience is celebrated in America on the Sunday following the sixth of January. It is misleading to call this feast Christmas, because it is more than Christmas. It is the celebration of the two important events in the life of Christ, namely, His Nativity, and His Baptism in the River Jordan.

This combined celebration of Nativity and Baptism we call with a long compound Armenian word, “asdouadz-a-haytnoutiun”, which means, “appearance of God” (among men), Theophany or Epiphany in English. The Baptism of Christ is as important as His Nativity as far as His “appearance” among men, as the Son of God, is concerned. As Christ’s Birth is the starting point of His human life so also is His Baptism the starting point of His public life and ministry. Besides, it was at His Baptism that the divine voice from heaven revealed, “He is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17). Therefore, the first thing we have to know about the so-called “Armenian Christmas” is that it is celebrated on the sixth of January, secondly, that it is the celebration of all events connected with the Birth of Christ, up to His public ministry; the Birth and Baptism holding the chief place among these various events. In the Armenian Church, on this holy day, a popular ceremony is performed. It is called “Jur-orhnek”, “blessing of waters”. It is performed in commemoration of Christ’s Baptism.

The question which I am sure will be asked by almost everybody in this connection will be: Even granting this united celebration of the Nativity and Baptism of Christ, why is it that Armenians are the only Christians celebrating this feast on the sixth of January and not on December twenty-fifth, as all the other Christians do? The answer briefly is this:

The exact day and year of Christ's Birth have never been satisfactorily established, because nothing definite is said about the date in the Gospel. But it is a historical fact that the celebration of Christ's Birth on January sixth in all the Christian Churches goes further back than that of December twenty-five.

A Catholic book, defending the Catholic form of Christianity, while giving the approximate dates of the institution of various church festivals, mentions Christmas in these words: "Christmas celebrated first on January sixth, kept on December twenty-fifth in Rome about 340". The reason for changing is given as follows, again by another Catholic author: "The Lord was born in the month of January on the same day on which we celebrate Epiphany, (i.e., on sixth of January), for, of old, the feast of the Nativity and Epiphany were kept on one and the same day. The reason why our Fathers changed the solemnity celebrated on the sixth of January, and transferred it to the 25th of December is as follows: It was the custom of pagans to celebrate the birthday of the Sun on this very day, December 25th. In these solemnities of festivals the Christians too were tempted to participate. The leaders of the Church, therefore, decided that the Birth of Christ be kept on this date (i.e. 25th of December) to overshadow the pagan festival, and on January sixth the feast of Epiphanies." (Catholic Encyclopedia: Articles, "Christmas" and "Epiphany").

This change, having begun in Rome, spread very quickly to the East and all over the Roman Empire. The change did not penetrate into Armenia, because the Armenians, having no such pagan festival on December 25th to suppress, did not see any reason for following the new practice; besides, as they were living almost isolated in their own mountains, no practical inconvenience was arising from their not following the general change. Most of all, however, the Armenians wanted to remain faithful to the ancient custom; so they have kept the old date through the centuries to the present day.

Therefore, the Armenians have a good historical reason for celebrating this festival on the sixth of January. They may have a practical reason, too, in America.

Christmas, as people celebrate it in America, although a most joyous occasion, is nevertheless, so full of excitement and commotion, that they are in danger of losing the real meaning of the day. We always have to keep in mind that Christmas is a religious and spiritual festival, and social festivities connected with it are incidental. To give more prominence to these worldly aspects of the feast than to the real thing is like cultivating cotton for its seeds rather than for that white precious stuff, the cotton itself. After everything has calmed down and even the New Year has gone by with all its distracting attractions, we can in true spirit, settle down to celebrate the feast which in Armenian is “Asdouadzahaytnoutiun”, the appearance of God among men; always remembering that it is the “appearing” of God on earth which has brought to this world that wonderful spirit with which everybody feels himself filled.

The briefest and maybe the most complete message of Theophany would be this: The Son of God has appeared on earth, becoming a son of man, in order that sons of men may someday appear in heaven as sons of God. May the God Lord make us worthy of this glorious destiny.

BISHOP SHNORK KALOUSTIAN
“Saints and Sacraments” (pp. 61-63)

DESCRIPTION OF A HISTORIC “JUR-ORHNEK”

(Blessing of Waters)

The celebrations of Christmas in the Armenian Church culminate in what is called in Armenian “Jur-orhnek”, which means “the blessing of waters”. It is a symbolic commemoration of Christ’s Baptism. This ceremony was celebrated in ancient times by the riverside or by the seashore. But, because of the difficulties caused by Mohammedan neighbors and for other reasons, it was later confined to the interior of the churches. This religious ceremony was accompanied by popular joyful festivities.

The following is a description of “Jur-orhnek” in the thirteenth century Sis, the Capital of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, during the reign of the Armenian King Levon the Great (1190-1220), the most glorious figure of this kingdom. We are indebted for this description to a European monk by the name of Canon Willebrand. In 1211 a group of European princes, going on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, passed through Cilicia. They stayed there for four months, enjoying the hospitality of the King. Canon Willebrand was one of them. On Armenian Christmas the King invited his noble guests to the celebration service of “Jur-orhnek”. This is how the Canon describes it.

“The next morning they all came to the riverside near the city. King Levon rode on a magnificent horse. His suite rode ahead of him, splendidly dressed and carrying flags, and a thousand men surrounded the King. Roupén, the Heir to the Throne, rode behind the King with all the nobles of the land. Then came a host of soldiers, all in splendid garments suitable to the occasion. The soldiers shouted in unison, ‘Holy King’! Then the trumpet sounded and the musical instruments struck their notes. Upon this, the King alighted from his horse and entered the tent which had been pitched for him on the bank of the river. Then came the Greek Metropolitan with his suite, and the Armenian clergy, headed by their Catholicos, in great pomp.

“They began to bless the water of the river. The Gospels were read in Armenian and Greek, the cross was lowered into the water, and at the same time, on the right, a pigeon was flown. One person entered the water and when he got to the middle of the river, he called out in a loud voice, ‘Long live our King’! Then he called out again says, ‘Let all Christendom never cease to be strong and lofty’, and all in unison replied ‘Amen’. Then the King and others sprinkled this blessed water on their persons, and the Assyrians, who were present, bathed in the water. After the blessing of the waters, the clergy went back, but the King and those with him went to the races, for a course was laid out near the city of Sis. The refined amusement afforded by these entertainments, I must confess, I am not able to describe. The sons of the nobility took part in fencing and javelin (arrow) throwing tournaments. Javelin

“When the days of Theophany were over, the Great King saw us off with royal honors. We visited other cities over which King Levon ruled”.

BISHOP S. KALOUSTIAN

“Saints and Sacraments” (pp. 67-68)

THE REAL SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRISTMAS

Christmas is the Feast of Freedom in the religious – and true – sense of the term. It is THE Holiday since holidays always mark a new start and Christmas commemorates the beginning of a “new” humanity.

Holidays are established for the commemoration of events which have a lasting spiritual significance. These events occur only once in the course of history, but their meaning overflows the set of circumstances that, together, produced them. The celebration, every year, of the day on which they have occurred, is meant precisely to receive their meaning. Holidays are set apart for the remembrance of a past, but always suggestive, event, and in the case of the most important, all other routine work ceases.

Individuals have “holidays” of their own. Birthdays, for example, as well as wedding anniversaries are significant mostly for the individuals concerned. They are celebrated because they mark the beginning either of life, or of an important and lasting change in the course of that life. Holidays always mark a new start.

There are holidays that families celebrate; and of course, nations have their own holidays. The holidays of nations usually mark the beginning of their history as an independent people, or the beginning of their history in its newest phase. They mark the beginning of a new national or communal life. Nations celebrate their great men with particular emphasis on those who singled themselves out in decisive battles. They do so because to die or to risk one’s life for one’s country is the greatest proof of one’s devotion to the nation’s ideal. A hero is officially remembered because in his death the nation sees the worth of its own existence. Confronted with the voluntary death of its hero or heroes, the nation says to itself: There are objectives for which we must live, for there are men who died for them.

Those heroes are remembered who are also liberators in a material as well as in a moral sense. Racial discrimination, for example, inasmuch as it implies selfishness, is a form of enslavement to forces of obscurantism. Lincoln is remembered because he fought unto death to liberate his people from the chains of the tendency that men have to exploit men of another and, due to certain circumstances, weaker race. We remember our own national hero, Vardan, because he liberated us from the threat of a backward and false religion.

In a word, every holiday is devoted to the memory of men or events that started a new life, that opened up wider horizons materially and morally; that made us freer men and women. Whenever this meaning of the holidays is lost sight of, they become at best extra days of relaxation and that's about all. On this level they may be useful, but they may also be harmful.

Holidays are days of rejoicing, festivity and happiness. Man's highest aspiration being freedom from all demonic limitations, it is only natural that he rejoice when he remembers an event which has made him free in any good sense. But when holidays are awaited anxiously for the sheer sake of eating, drinking and making merry and exchanging gift, they play a binding rather than freeing role. There was a time when children used to await Christmas to have new clothes and they were sure they will wear for the first time to go to church. These days seem to have passed, and with them, the holiness of Christmas.

The "Christmas Spirit"

We still speak, for example, of a "Christmas Spirit" but there are an amazing number of young Christian (including Armenian) people who are in complete ignorance as to the Source of that spirit. And it is for this reason perhaps that much discourse and cheap publicity about the Christmas

spirit defeats in many instances the very purpose of having a Christmas holiday.

The significance that the phrase "Christmas spirit" has come to assume is pretty vague. This phrase means loosely a state of self-imposed inner dispositions which, in the case of two different categories of people, may mean two different things. It may mean, for those who are more favorably placed in the mad race of humanity for more money and power, a certain kindness toward those who are, in this same mad race, less fortunate. For the latter the phrase "Christmas spirit" may mean a self-imposed artificial happiness. Thus the Christmas season is set apart as a period distinct from the rest of the year during which, and during which alone, people are supposed to be particularly generous on one hand and unmindful of their misery or misfortunes, on the other.

But this is not the meaning of Christmas. The Christmas season is not a period during which, and during which alone, one must be psychologically better armed against the vicissitudes of destiny. The stomach of a poor, hungry child is as painful in the middle of July as it is toward the end of December, and one must be in a Christmas spirit, truly, sincerely in this spirit, in July as well as in December.

Christmas is a season of recapitulation, as it were. Christmas should remind you why, throughout the whole year you must be in a genuine Christmas spirit. And the Christmas spirit when it is genuine and true, is an attitude of worship. Kindness toward men and an active hope of better day to come (which hope alone provides a healthy, true happiness) go with an attitude of worship. You share generously what you have if, and only if, you do not fear the uncertainty of your future; you can afford to hope for better days to come and be actively engaged in the work of bringing them about, again, if there is no fear in your heart. Only an optimistic belief in the future makes men both kind and happy. But belief in the future, when it is thought out, becomes belief in God.

“This is God”

On Christmas day God was born in a stable, of Mary, the Jewish virgin girl. This is at once the most awful and fearsome and the most gloriously joyful statement that man could ever make. On Christmas day there was a child moving, crying and breathing like all the babies of the world, and yet you could point at him and say: This is God. He was made Man to show to men God's, namely his own concern for them. Henceforward belief in God was belief in a historical FACT. Indubitable foundations were laid for belief in the goodness of existence. Love, inner peace, kindness, happiness were now seen, felt possibilities. The Messiah, the Hope of Man was no longer Hope alone – He, the Messiah, was Hope and Fulfillment simultaneously. He was Fulfillment through Love. You could now hope for the realization of your deepest aspirations; have faith, namely know that your deepest aspirations will come true; have love, namely do things and live with the absolute assurance that all seen and unseen things belonging to God, and their betterment, is for His eternal glory. Now examine your deepest aspirations and you will see that they can be summed up in this one profound desire: to live in an atmosphere of abundant love and to give thanks to Him Who makes it possible. Some two thousand years ago when a new star brightened the firmament, this, your hope, was already fulfilled. Christmas is the celebration of this Fulfillment.

Events that make us more free

Holidays, we said, are days on which events are remembered which have caused an individual or a group to begin a new life; events which made them more free.

Christmas is a world holiday inasmuch as it began a new life for all men; inasmuch as it freed all men from the forces of evil. The Way was now opened for generations

past, present and future. God's hand was and is actually stretched out. To hold it, is our responsibility.

Christianity and Progress

The world seems not to care to hold the Divine Hand. And we are all painfully aware that outside of superficial greetings, outside of giving and taking presents, an attempt to penetrate into the real meaning of Christmas seems to be a mockery, when wars and rumors of wars continue, when nations rise against nations.

Yet a retrospective glance at the history of the world will soon convince us that the progress that the world has made in the last two thousand years is immense. This progress in all fields of human behavior was possible because one night at the village of Bethlehem the Son of Man was born. Ever since the world became a better place to live in, to the extent to which the world consciously or unconsciously looked at Him and obeyed Him. The same obedience and gaze will guarantee all further progress.

H. N.

"The Armenian Guardian" January 1953 (pp. 5-8)

CHRISTMASTIDE IN THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

(A retrospective description of Christmas preparations)

Like other Christians, the Armenians at all times have taken great pains to celebrate Christmas in a manner suitable to the dignity and spirit of the occasion. However, it is well to know that we have no such tradition as “Santa Claus” or a “Christmas Tree”. These are entirely of Western origin. Similarly, we have no “Creche” (the French word for “crib”), an essential factor of the Christmas celebrations in the Roman Catholic Church, the origin of which is ascribed to St. Francis of Assisi. These traditions, although not yet formally accepted by the Armenian Church, being in themselves innocent and merely an occasion of good cheer, have in certain countries penetrated into the family and school celebrations of our people.

The Christmas preparations in the Armenian Church have mostly had a religious character. In keeping with the significance and spirit of this Feast, the beginning of the Christmas season is marked by a week of fasting, which begins about fifty days before the actual day of Christmas. This week of fasting, as well as the whole period of fifty days, is considered as a reminder of St. John the Baptist’s proclamations about the coming of Christ, and therefore, constitutes an earnest invitation to repentance.

The week before the last preceding Christmas is dedicated to some of the most famous saints of the Church. These commemorations are called, in our church, “Avak Doner” (Great Festivals). The services are performed in such splendor and dignity as to give us a foretaste of the greater celebrations ahead of us; this is true particularly in Jerusalem, with which each of these Saints has some personal association. The churches are adorned with special decorations and take on a festive appearance, with brighter lights than on the day of ordinary services. The faithful come to church in greater numbers. The “Sharagans” or hymns are

sung with greater solemnity. All persons bearing the name of the day's Saint receive congratulations.

Almost every one of these Saints is related, in some way or another, to Jesus, and therefore, they, taken together, are known as "The witnesses of Theophany". They are:

King David, the most illustrious of the ancestors of Jesus according to the flesh. It was to David that God promised that Christ would be born of his family.

St. James, "the Brother of the Lord", is the closest relative of Jesus, being one of His cousins, who afterwards became the first Bishop of Jerusalem. It is on the site of his house that the present splendid Armenian Cathedral of St. James' in Jerusalem is built.

St. Stephen, the first among the followers of Jesus to shed his blood for his Master and thus entitled to lead that galaxy of martyrs who constitute the very glory of the Christian Church. His title is "Protomartyr", the First Martyr.

St. Paul and St. Peter, the central pillars of the Universal Church. They have played the greatest role in spreading Christianity.

The two brothers, St. James (the Elder or the Major) and St. John, the Evangelist, were called "Sons of Thunder", because of their great zeal, devotion and love for Christ. They were the "Apostles whom Christ loved".

These church solemnities are followed again by a week of fasting, which is a time of devotion and preparations. These preparations take two different forms; the internal and the external.

The internal or inner preparations consist mainly of prayers, fasting, confessions, penance, and regular daily church attendance. The external are of a physical nature, although symbolically significant in their resemblance, such as cleaning of the house and everything in it. Last minute touches are given to every detail of the preparations, such as final checking of the Christmas shopping to see that everybody gets a new dress and other presents, and making sure of all the ingredients to be used in the different Christmas

dishes. In short, no effort is spared so as fully to enjoy the happiness and cheer so characteristic of this most popular of all religious festivals. In spite of the fact that this last week is a period of fasting, and, therefore, of physical deprivation, one cannot fail to sense a feeling of contentment and joy in everybody. For example, fathers feel happy because they have had the joy of buying something new for every member of the family, in addition to the surprise they hold for the actual day of Christmas. Children are happy speculating on the toys and other presents they know they will receive. They try hard to be good, for on their behavior depends whether or not they will receive the presents promised to them. Housewives hustle about the house grumbling about small trifles so as to hide their inner joy and satisfaction – for after all is not this a week of fasting and are they not expected to observe it strictly? And what glowing joy when the numerous Christmas preparations move on to completion without a hitch! But above all wives are happy because they can get from their husbands almost everything they ask for, since during this season mankind feels kindly toward its own, and husbands hardly ever refuse a pleasure to their wives or children. This is a time when men seem to forget the hardships, for a smile flickers on every face.

On Christmas Eve everybody hurries to Church. Many have been fasting the whole day, neither eating nor drinking, in order to be able to take Holy Communion after the Divine Liturgy, celebrated in the evening. The long readings from the Old Testament – bearing on the coming of Christ – do not seem too long, for it is not the clergy, but the ordinary members of the Church who read these lessons and who bring out their best selves on this occasion. Even the mistakes they make, and their often wavering voices add a charm to the occasion. Then follows the evening Liturgy, which is sung with special enthusiasm. After the Divine Liturgy, everybody hurries home, because there is not very much time before the long awaited Christmas dinner. The Eve of a spiritual feast within the church now becomes an

occasion for family rejoicing round a table decked with all the delicacies of the season. This is a great day for family reunions; the family table is almost sacred.

In the small hours of the next morning, when most people have only had a short nap or no sleep at all, the bells of the churches toll in the night, ringing out the good news of Christ's Birth. The "jamgotches" (those who "call" people to church) sing in the streets, "Aysor Don e Sourp Dzununtian, Avedis ..." (Today is the feast of Holy Birth, glad tidings), "Ov pari Christoniayk, egayk I Sourp Egeghetzi (O ye pious Christians, come to church). Everybody is up and ready for church. Those coming from afar carry lanterns. The churches are full. Some times, people can not find room in their own church, so they try other churches. All the churches, however humble they may be, are tonight at their best. In the darkness of the night the flickering lights of the candles and lanterns create an atmosphere of heavenly rejoicing in God's house. The air rings with the glorious notes of the Christmas carols, sung with great fervor and solemnity: "Khorhourt meds yev Skanchely" (Mystery grand and wonderful) and others. Children's thin but merry voices send back echoes. "Christos Dsunav yev Haytnetzav" (Christ is born and manifested). Then the whole congregation sings in unison the "Park I Partzouns" (Gloria in Excelsis).

Towards the end of the Divine Liturgy, practically the whole congregation approaches the Holy Altar to take Holy Communion. It is at this supreme moment that unity is manifested inside the church through the giving of the kiss and greeting of reconciliation and brotherly love. Every Christian leaves the church, carrying with him this same spirit of love into the world. Outside the church, in the faint light of approaching dawn, he expresses his joy in more informal ways. The day's greeting is "Christos dzunav yev haytnetzav", or Shunorhavor sourp Dzunount" (I wish you a Christmas full of grace). Thus is achieved the ultimate aim of Christmas – the fraternization of all, for, on this day, all those who have been on bad terms with others, are brought

together, disputes are settled, wrongs are forgiven, ill feelings are forgotten. Even the sinners feel a certain purification. Almost miraculously, if only for a short time, the angelic wish “Good will amongst men” becomes a reality. It is, therefore, all the sadder, that many of these beautiful traditions and the spirit embodied in them, are daily becoming a thing of the past and their memory growing dimmer and dimmer.

BISHOP SHNORK KALOUSTIAN
“Saints and Sacraments”

THE ARMENIAN CHRISTMAS AND WHY IT FALLS ON JANUARY 6TH

It must have occurred too many amongst our Armenian communities as Yule-tide comes round each year, to wonder why the Armenian Christmas Day is celebrated on the 6th of January (Old Style), while the Western Churches celebrate it on the 25th of December, or twelve days earlier.

It may be of interest to inquire, concisely, into the reasons which have contributed to the anachronism, which has been in existence now for well nigh sixteen hundred years, and which have been diversely supported and controverted by opposing interpreters of the Biblical Doctrine and of otherwise purely traditional as well as apparently authenticated testimony of ancient writers bearing upon the subject.

It is undeniable that from the very commencement of the propagation of Christianity down to our own times, the Armenian Church has unswervingly adhered to the 6th of January as a day of Church festival, in joint memory of the Nativity and the Baptism of Christ and of the Epiphany (Haitnootune in Armenian).

The Western Churches have similarly, since about the middle of the fourth century, celebrated the 6th of January as a day of festival in memory of our Savior, but with regard to the Epiphany only. Before that, however, the 6th of January was accepted and celebrated by them as the Day of the Nativity of Christ as well. In support of this fact two proofs may be given. St. John Chrysostom (345-407 A.D.), in a sermon preached at Antioch, the Capital of Syria, in 386 A.D., declared that from the very dawn of Christianity all Christians celebrated the Birth and Baptism of Christ together on the 6th of January, and that it was barely ten years since that feast of December 25th was held in the West, from Thrace as far as Cadiz. Epiphanius, writing in 375 A.D., says the 6th of January was the day of Christ's Birth and the Epiphanies (meaning the various manifestations of our

Savior, that is: the appearances of the Star to the Magi of the East, the Feeding of the multitude and the Marriage in Cana).

The earliest Theological writers and Commentators have given various reasons for antedating Christ's Birth to the 25th of December. One was that the earliest converts in Syria, Cappadocia and Mesopotamia, were reluctant to abandon their cherished festivals to which they had been accustomed in pagan days, and that to win them over, the Latin Fathers of the Church, as early as 354 A.D. transferred the human birthday of our Savior from 6th of January to 25th December, which was then a Mithraic feast, or the Birthday of the Sun.

Another reason was that the early Christians in Judea, in celebrating both the feasts on 6th January, used to assemble early in the morning in Bethlehem to commemorate the Birth and then they hastened to Jordan, some dozen miles on the other side of Jerusalem, to celebrate the Baptism, which fatigued them greatly and rendered the celebrations indecorous. An appeal was made to the Pope, who caused an exhaustive examination to be made of the Jewish Archives which were carried to Rome, some three hundred years previously during the sacking of Jerusalem by the Romans. Among these, it is said were discovered the writings of the early Hebrew historian Josephus, which de facto, gave the Birthday of Christ as the 25th of December. Hence, its adoption. The doubtfulness of the validity of the above reasons must, however, be apparent to any student of the history of ancient times.

The great weight of the argument, which has convinced the Armenian Church in its adherence to the 6th of January as Christmas Day, as bequeathed by the Apostles, confirmed by St. Gregory the Illuminator and authenticated by the Holy Fathers of our Church, is based, fundamentally and entirely on testimony evidence contained in the writings of the Evangelists, which constitute the very foundation and structure alike of the precepts and doctrines of the Christian Church. It seems almost superfluous to say that we have no civil birth registration to rely upon and few authentic secular or historic

evidence which we may consult with absolute certainty as to their veracity. The Gospels are our only unimpeachable source from which we may derive our Church beliefs, rites and observances. And, it may be added, the earliest authorities of the Western Churches by no means ignored the essential fact in determining the date on which, in accordance with their reading of the Gospel, Christmas Day fell. There is, however, this difference that the conclusions which they arrived at are not wholly unassailable when contributive factors are brought to aid with ascertained chronology, in interpreting the special passages in the New Testament bearing on the subject.

The Armenian Church, from the very beginning, adopted the 6th of January as Christmas Day, having for the basis of its calculation the particulars in regard to the Annunciation of Virgin Mary as given in the first chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke. The first line of the argument is based upon the entry of a “certain priest named Zacharias” who went to the Temple, according to the custom of the priest’s office, “to burn incense”, when an angel of the Lord appeared and announced to him that his wife Elizabeth would bear him a son whose name should be John.

This particular ceremony of burning the incense is, by the common consent of the Church authorities of whatsoever denominations, associated with the Jewish Feast of “Yom Kippur” (or Day of Atonement), which unalterably falls annually on the 10th day of the Hebrew month of Tishri, that is, the 27th day of the Roman month September (Old Style). This important religious ceremony lasted five days and was immediately followed by the hebdomadal “Feast of Tabernacles”, that is, the two feasts together lasted twelve days.

During these twelve days the officiating chosen priest remained entirely by himself in the Temple, praying and performing the appointments of his office in perfect solitude, while the people remained “praying without”. Then we find that “as soon as the days of his ministration were accom-

lished”, which as mentioned before were twelve days, Zacharias “departed to his own house”.

It may be remarked that his house was not in Jerusalem but a little distance away in the “hill country”, which would necessitate a few hours’ journey.

And it was “after those days”, that is, after twelve days’ ministration in the Temple and journey to his house, that Zacharias met his wife Elizabeth again for the first time since the announcement to him in the Temple by the angel. This meeting of Zacharias with his wife therefore corresponds with the 23rd day of Tishri or the 10th of December.

We then find that “in the sixth month” from the time of this occurrence, takes place the appearance of the angel Gabriel and the event of the Annunciation of Virgin Mary, which by calendrical computation is equivalent to the 7th of April, which is the annual fixed date for the Annunciation in the Armenian Church; and nine months after that, gives the 6th of January as the Birth of Christ.

The Western Churches, in accordance with their acceptance of the events narrated in the Gospel and as viewed by them, have adopted a parallel method of computation, but with this exception, that they commence it from the very first day of Atonement when the angel appeared to Zacharias in the Temple, instead of from the date – twelve days after – when he reached his house again and met his wife, as adopted by the Armenian Church, which appears to be more reasonable and logical.

“The Armenian Guardian” January 1956

CHRISTMAS SHORT STORIES

Archbishop Elisee Tourian, late Patriarch of Jerusalem, has written a volume of lovely little poems based on stories about the childhood of Christ that were known in the Middle Ages and that found their way into the so-called “Gospel of the Childhood of Christ” of which the Armenian translation is extinct. Four of these poems are told here in prose.

THE CLAY BIRDS

The Christ Child with them, a group of boys were hesitating to continue their game of hide-and-seek near that place where there was barely a tree or a bush to hide behind. The ground was still wet from the rain of the night before. The boys’ bare feet would sink into the soft earth. They were uncomfortable and sad.

They wanted to play some new game. But what could they play? Jesus looked at the muddy grounds and gave the idea. “Let’s make birds!” he said. They liked the suggestion. Each boy took a little clay and gave it the shape of a dove or of a sparrow. Then they placed the clay birds side by side on the wall.

With great satisfaction they were looking at their handiwork. The bird-shaped pieces of clay were shining beautifully in the sun. “I wish”, one of the boys said, “they could fly”. “I wish I could breathe life into them”.

“I can”, said little Jesus into his ear. And when he clapped his little hands, the whole flock took wing and flew away.

THE MAID WITH LEPROUS SORES

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, there came wise men from the East to worship him. When Herod the King heard these things he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him. After the wise men departed the angel of the

Lord appeared to Joseph in the night saying, “Do not tarry here. Arise and take the young child and his mother and flee into Egypt, for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him” (Matt. 2:13).

Joseph obeyed the angel’s bidding and the Holy Family started on its long and arduous journey. They climbed up and down over hill and dale walking from morn’ until night. They must hurry in order to save the precious Child. Thirst long tortured them, and Joseph searched in that desert for a spring or water, but in vain. On their way they came across a village maid who was carrying an earthen pitcher filled with sweet fresh milk, some of which she gave to the Christ Child. But the maid’s appearance was horrifying. Her hands and face were completely covered with leprous sores.

Yet, all of a sudden, just as Christ reached out his little hands and caressed her in gratitude for her kindness, the maid’s body was made clean and beautiful.

Happiness surged within the maid and when she came to a low rivulet she had to look at herself once more. So beautiful she had become that she could not believe her eyes. With wonderment and happiness she examined her beautiful countenance over again, and though she did not know what had happened to her, she had no doubt at all that it was the Christ Child’s hands which had worked the miracle.

FIREFLIES

Joseph and Mary hurried to get out of the forest to a safe place, but the darkness of night descended upon them.

They could no longer see their path. Even the dumb donkey, which was carrying Mary and the Child Jesus, was afraid to take another step.

Joseph fell into deep thought and there was unspeakable grief in his heart. He did not know what to do. Then he suddenly saw a ray of light twinkling in a thorny bush. Then others like it – fireflies – flying round and round, dancing up

and down, spreading their light in the darkness. They pointed the way out of the forest so that the Holy Family would not go astray and wander.

Thus on this road of hardships, they helped the Child Jesus. Even small and insignificant insects served the Lord, as they could.

THE SICK LITTLE BOY

Through that hazy light the Holy Family found its way out of the forest until they arrived tired and weary before an old and humble hut.

Joseph knocked at the door and asked the landlord for shelter to pass the night. "All through the way", he said, "Mary, the Child and I were tormented by the unrelenting heat. We were forced to swallow dust and wind".

The landlady attended to their needs first, putting milk and bread before them. But when she saw that little Jesus was weary she gave him a refreshing, cool bath. And then starting at the Infant said, "This Boy is not of our country". Joseph and Mary were grateful to the woman. But the poor woman suddenly started to cry, saying: "Do you know? My own dear baby is sick, very sick. I do not even know if he will live".

When she withdrew the blanket to show her baby lying there unbreathing, his eyes closed, Mary's heart was greatly touched. She had compassion for that unfortunate mother.

She turned to the woman and spoke with great confidence, in the name of Jesus. "Take my advice", she said. "Wash your baby with the water with which you bathed the Child Jesus". The Egyptian woman could not see why she should do that. But Mary insisted and she obeyed her. Then she knew. After the bath the baby opened his eyes and with a lasting smile greeted his little Guest. He was no longer sick.

The mother caressed her child, and kissed his cheeks.
She did not have to cry now ... the life of her darling was
granted to her.

Translated by H. B. N.

“The Armenian Guardian” January 1953 (pp. 10-11, 15)

ARMENIAN CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Shunorhavor Nor Dari yev Bari Galand
May the New Year be full of grace
And the New Year's Day auspicious

Christos dzunav yev haydnetzav
Christ is born and revealed

Orhnyal eh haytnootyoonun Christosi
Blessed is the Revelation of Christ

* * *

In the West the period “Christmas season” ends on Christmas day at midnight. This is not quite the case in the East. There, Christmas day falls somewhere in the middle of “Christmas season”. Here it would be somewhat odd if someone greeted you with a “Merry Christmas” on the 26th of December. In the East it is very normal in Armenian circles to give to each other the “good tidings” of Christ’s birth several days after the 6th of January.

In compact Armenian communities in the Middle East, they are only beginning to send Christmas cards to each other and they do so if they are living in different cities. People of the same city visit each other and greet each other personally on or a few days after Christmas. The greeting is not “Merry Christmas”. The way Armenians greet each other on Christmas day is much more sensible and profound. Christmas is a happy occasion by definition. On that day one does not tell you “May Christmas be for you a day of merriment”. He simply tells you what the holiday is about; he repeats to you the good tidings; that he surmises, ought normally to make you happy in a profound sense. “Christos dzunav yev haydnetzav”. This is what happened. “Christ is born and revealed”.

The answer to the Armenian Christmas greeting is also impersonal. The preoccupation of both persons who greet each other is not their person. Whether you did or will enjoy Christmas is not the central point of interest, as far as the person that you greet is concerned. He is concerned with the Event itself. He places himself inside the Event, as it were. He forgets for a moment about you and about himself, and upon hearing the good tidings he reverently answers: "Blessed is the Revelation of Christ". That is to say, independently of YOUR reaction to it, independently of the circumstances in which you find yourself on Christmas day, the Event itself is worth being informed of; it is an Event of the utmost importance. Some time ago, during this period, Christ was revealed and His revelation is blessed.

In the West if you are dangerously sick on the 25th of December, the wish "Merry Christmas" does not make sense. And if the person who greets you has very recently lost something or somebody dear to him, the wish "The Same to You" becomes almost ridiculous.

The impersonal character of the Armenian (and Eastern) greetings indicates plainly that news of the Birth of Christ and the message implied in this Event are relevant to your situation no matter what this situation is.

"The Armenian Guardian" January 1953 (pp. 1-2)

BAPTISM

Baptism, Chrismation and Communion are the most important Mysteries or Sacraments of the Church. The Order of Baptism of the Armenian Church, as that of other Eastern Orthodox Churches, comprises all three of these mysteries together with certain related sacramentals, which complete the sacred rite of Christian initiation.

* * *

The Lord Jesus himself received baptism and chrismation in the river Jordan. He was baptized with water at the hands of John the Forerunner and thus showed his solidarity with sinful men (Matthew 3:16-18. Mark 1:9-11. Luke 3:21-22).

He expected his followers to be baptized with the baptism with which he was baptized (Mark 10:38) and so instructed his disciples (Matthew 28:1-9).

The Church faithfully and diligently observed Christ's ordinance to baptize all those who wanted to enter his Kingdom (Acts 2:38. Romans 6:3-4. I Corinthians 1:16. Galatians 3:27. Ephesians 4:5. Colossians 2:12. I Peter 3:21).

After his baptism in the Jordan Jesus yet referred to his baptism of death (Luke 12:50). His baptism of water and spirit was accomplished in his death (John 19:30), which is symbolized in the immersion of the neophyte in water. His resurrection is symbolized when the neophyte is raised out of the water of the font. Christ's baptism stretched through the whole of his earthly life. Chrismation represents the unction of Christ by the Holy Spirit over the River Jordan as well as his resurrection through the power of the Holy Spirit.

* * *

Through baptism and chrismation a person enters the Church as a member of the body of Christ. His original or original sin is forgiven. He takes upon himself the obliga-

tions as well as the privileges of membership in the Church of Christ and is personally committed to the Christian cause as a citizen in the Kingdom of God, where a new status is conferred on him

Chrismation is the sacramental or mystical invocation of and sealing by the Holy Spirit whom the neophyte receives after his baptism and becomes engrafted and integrated in the body of Christ and a participant in its life. Thus through the Seal of Chrismation a Christian is assured of the power of the Spirit of resurrection. Chrismation is the Pentecost of the new Christian as well as the anointing of the neophyte in the royal priesthood of the faithful (I Peter 2:9).

Holy Communion nourishes and sustains the spiritual life of a Christian who is continuously renewed with the power of the Holy Spirit whereby his bond of union with Christ Jesus is maintained.

The order of Baptism is a public and not a private service. By that service a neophyte is welcome into the fellowship of the baptized. The priest administering the sacrament represents both Christ and his body the Church into which the neophyte is received.

Baptism is performed only once. The Church's Creed declares that there is only one baptism. If it has been administered in a manner in which its essential conditions are fulfilled it cannot be repeated and it is valid for all Christians who form the one fellowship in Christ.

A Christian receives the gifts bestowed on him through baptism and chrismation in the way in which a seed is received in the soil. If the soil is fertile and productive, the seed will then be alive and will grow in time. Otherwise it will remain dormant, inoperative and fruitless.

An infant is not conscious of what takes place at this christening. Yet, as in all the other phases of his growing life, his parents take upon themselves the responsibility of bringing up their child in a way which they believe is best for him. They make a commitment with a view to rearing the child in the faith of their fathers. Parents and the sponsor

(Godfather) declare the infant's faith on his behalf and the congregation stands as a witness thereto.

Thus the child is taken into the company of believers, where what is affected in baptism and chrismation gradually unfolds in his soul. He is put on the path leading to Christian perfection. As the child clings, during his immaturity, to his mother and receives nourishment and care from her, so also he clings during his formative years, to his Mother Church wherein he is born and receives the nourishment of the faith. Then as the child grows, gradually becoming independent and assuming responsibility for his own life and conduct, spiritually and in all other respects, he becomes free to accept or reject what he has received as an infant.

A child brought to baptism receives all the three great mysteries necessary for salvation one after the other and becomes a full Christian through one continuous sacred act. For the Church has no age limits for the salvation of man through God's grace.

* * *

The word 'baptism' is derived from a Greek word which means 'washing by entering the water'. The word 'christening' means 'to become or to make someone a Christian'. 'Chrismation' means 'anointing with chrism', i.e. with holy oil or myron. The Armenian word for baptism is mkrtel, mkrut'iwn. The word knunk is also in common use, meaning 'sealing (with myron)'. Sometimes people use also the word 'miwronel', which corresponds to 'chirsmation'. In Western Churches the word 'confirmation' is used for 'chrismation'.

ARCHBISHOP TIRAN NERSOYAN
"The Order of Baptism" (pp. I-V)

NOTES ON THE RITUAL OF BAPTISM

Time of Baptism

Christian parents should have their child baptized when an infant. Church canons strongly advise baptism on the eighth day after birth. In any case a child should be brought to baptism as soon as practicable after he is eight days old.

Place of Baptism

It is the established rule of the Church that Baptism should be performed in the Church and not at home or in any other public or private place. In extreme cases, however, when the child is ill and cannot be brought to the Church or where there is no church that is accessible, the priest, after careful consideration of the circumstances, may decide to perform the Sacrament in the home of the child or in some other appropriate place. (In the Holy Land baptism is occasionally performed in the River Jordan at the spot where Jesus is traditionally said to have been baptized.)

The Minister

Only a priest in good standing can administer the sacrament of the Order of Baptism. In the Armenian Church a deacon or a lay person may in no circumstances perform baptism.

Godfather (Sponsor)

The person acting as Godfather at baptism must be a member in good standing of the Church in which the child will grow as a member. For the Godfather is a special ambassador of the Church to the family of the neophyte.

Godmother

The Armenian Church has no explicit provision for a Godmother at baptism. But we can consider a Godmother the person who takes care of the child during the performance of the Order of Baptism by holding the child while the Godfather has not yet taken him, by undressing or dressing the child at the times prescribed, and in general attending upon the child during the performance of the sacrament.

Elements of the Order

Certain sacramentals are included in the Order of Baptism as preliminaries for the reception of the great mysteries. Thus the Order of Baptism consists of the following:

1. Penitential Psalms
2. Blessing of Narot (Baptismal braid)
3. Renouncement of Satan
4. Confession of Faith
5. Entrance into the Church
6. Holy Baptism
7. Holy Chrismation ("The Seal")
8. Adoration at the Altar
9. Holy Communion
10. Blessing of Dismissal

The first four parts of the rite are said at the entrance of the Church, or in the narthex.

The fifth, ninth and tenth parts are performed in the Center Chancel. The sixth and seventh are performed near the Font in the Baptistry. The eighth is performed at the Altar.

Near the Door of the Church

At the beginning the Priest, fully vested in sacerdotal garments, should stand at the western end of the Nave facing the Altar. The Godfather should be on the left of the Priest in the same line. The Deacon should stand to the right of the Priest. Two acolytes should stand on either side of the line.

The Deacon and the Godfather should be vested in shapik (tunicle). The Godmother, holding the child, should stand behind the Priest near the Godfather. People attending should stand reverently behind and around the officiants. In this position the officiants should begin to do their part paying careful attention to the rubrics, i.e. the short running instructions in this manual.

In the Chancel

When the part entitled Confession ends, a small procession should be formed with the Acolytes going in front, followed by the Deacon, followed by the Priest, then the Godfather holding the child in his arms coming last. The procession should walk up the center aisle of the Church followed by the Godmother and the parents of the child, relatives and attending friends. Entering the Center Chancel, the officiants should reform the line they previously had standing in the middle of the Chance.

Clothes and Towels

At this point the Godmother and others should take their places on the front pews on the left (north) side of the Church. The Godmother should have the new white clothes and the towels with her, placed on the bench beside her. She must have ready a large towel in which the child must be wrapped after being undressed during the Prayer over the Water. When giving the child to the Godfather, she must spread the towel on both arms of the Godfather, seeing that the head of the child rests on the right arm of the Godfather. After the immersion of Baptism the Godfather should continue to hold the child wrapped in the large towel, facing the Priest.

At the Font

When the Prayers of Entrance are ended the little procession should be reformed and should proceed to the

Font. If the Font is situated in the left (north) Chancel of the Church, then the people should remain in their places. But if the Church has a Baptistry, then the Godmother and all others should follow the procession and stand around the Font at some distance in such a way that they can see and follow the ceremony. The Godmother should have a table near her on which she can put the clothes and the towels and can dress and undress the child. The people must be careful not to crowd each other's view of the proceedings.

At the Font the officiants should stand as follows: the two Acolytes on either side of the Font; the Priest in front of the Font; the Godfather to the left of the Priest and the Deacon to the right of the latter.

Before the Sanctuary

When Chrismation is ended and the child has been dressed with his new white clothes, the Priest and the other officiants should form a procession as described above and should go and stand in the Center Chancel. The Godmother, parents, relatives and others should follow and stand behind the Godfather at some distance until the end of the ceremony with Dismissal.

Joining in the Prayers

Copies of this manual should be previously supplied to all attending and they should make the responses to the biddings of the Deacon, join in the recitation of the psalms, the Lord's Prayer and the singing of the hymns, whenever they can.

Standing and Sitting

The whole ceremony of the Order of Baptism, if performed properly, will last about forty-five minutes. During this period it is advisable that people should remain standing. But those who are weak or feel tired may be seated when

psalms are recited, when biddings are said, when the Prophet and the Apostle are read.

Saluting the Neophyte

After the Blessing of Dismissal the Priest should kiss the newly baptized on the forehead. The Godfather, the parents, relatives and friends should do likewise.

Washing after Baptism

The mother of the child should see that when the underclothing of the child is washed for the first time after the Chrismation, the water of the washing is poured out into the garden, so that any trace of myron is not mixed with unclean water in the drain. This washing should be done at home separately.

Communion during Liturgy

It is a highly recommended custom to defer the administration of Holy Communion to the child until the next celebration of the Divine Liturgy on a Sunday morning. The Godfather should bring the newly baptized to the Church where he should be given Holy Communion at the appointed Time. The celebrant Priest should say the Prayer of Communion prescribed in this handbook before giving the Communion to the child.

Adult Baptism

If the person to be baptized is an adult or a child that is grown up and can walk and control himself, the procedure at his (or her) baptism should be the following:

All the parts of the Order of Baptism should be performed as prescribed.

The neophyte should stand between the Priest and the Godfather during the ceremony. He (or she) should join in

the recitation of the Renunciation and the Creed. The one response, which is made to the question of the Priest after the Prayer of Baptism, beginning with the words “Faith, hope, etc.,” should be given by the Godfather, as in the case of baptism of an infant.

The neophyte should be barefoot. He (or she) should dress lightly and in such a way that the upper parts of his (or her) chest and back are exposed. If a woman, she should be without any adornments or cosmetics. At the time of actual baptism the neophyte should stand close to the Font and should bend his (or her) head down over the Font. The Priest, using a bowl of his cupped right hand, should pour of the blessed water in the Font over the neophyte’s head three times, seeing that his (or her) face also is washed. Then the Priest should wet with a sponge or a piece of cloth or cotton the chest, the back and the feet of the neophyte. Then a towel should be given to him (or her) to dry.

Chrismation should be administered while the neophyte remains standing near the Font.

After Chrismation the neophyte should be led by the Godfather or the Godmother, as the case may be, to the choir room in the Church where he (or she) should be fully dressed with new clothes. The neophyte should then return to the Center Chancel and at the proper time he (or she) should be led by the Priest up to the Bema for the Adoration at the Altar. The Priest and the neophyte should make their bows at the Altar, as prescribed in the rubrics, and should then return to the Chancel and depart after the Blessing of Dismissal.

ARCHBISHOP TIRAN NERSOYAN
“The Order of Baptism” (pp. 85-89)

ARMENIA IN THE FIFTH CENTURY

The call to celebrate the 1500th anniversary of the Battle of Vardanians has come to us from our Patriarch Catholicos George VI in Holy Etchmiadzin. From the successor of St. Gregory the Enlightener, and of another great church leader who occupied the throne of St. Gregory at the time of St. Vardan, that is St. Joseph the Catholicos. A call which echoed the voice of the conscience of the church and our nation.

The fact that an event which took place as far back as 1500 years ago still brings together the whole Armenian nation and inspires them with the faith of the great leader of that time, is extremely significant. Hardly any anniversary is celebrated at the present time in the world as old as 1500 years, except of course the purely Christian feasts and celebrations, which have a purely religious character.

It is not necessary for me to give now to you the details of the historical facts which succeeded rapidly one another in the short period of two years, that is in the course of two years from the spring of 449 to the spring of 451. These details are extremely significant and interesting as well as instructive, but I hope you will acquaint yourselves with those details through other means. I shall therefore confine myself to certain salient facts which have given to the Battle of Avarayr the importance which it has had in the course of the last 15 centuries.

The Vardanians' struggle against the Persians and the Zoroastrian religion in the fifth century was significant and important in two respects. First, because it thwarted and prevented the Persians' drive westward in order to engulf the western Christian civilization of which the main stronghold was Byzantium, that is Constantinople.

Secondly, the Battle of Avarayr is significant because it determined the destiny of the Armenian people.

In the fifth century nowhere in the civilized world were the church and state separated as they are at present. Religion and religious problems were of vital and paramount

importance to politicians, to diplomats as well as to military leaders, because a nation, just like an individual, had its own religion by which its conduct in every sphere of its life was controlled and directed. Nations were not merely secular political entities in the 5th century; they were also religious and cultural entities at the same time.

Another important fact to bear in mind is that Armenia was an important country in the eastern parts of the Roman Empire in the 5th century. The period of greatness for Armenia, spiritually as well as economically, militarily as well as politically. The country, that is Armenia, felt strong and ambitious in the 5th century, in spite of the loss of its political independence and in spite of its being divided between the Roman and Persian Empires. It should not be forgotten that empires are not nations. Empires are composed of a group of nations, and among the nations of that period, Armenia was one of the strongest in that part of the world.

This strength and importance was the result of the spiritual regeneration of the nation by its conversion to Christianity at the beginning of the 4th century, that is 301, and also by the translation of the Bible into Armenian and the Christian literary renaissance of Armenia, which took place at the beginning of the 5th century. These two events led the Armenian nation to the Battle of Avarayr. They formed the character of the Armenian nation; they created, in a sense, the Armenian spirit with which St. Vardan and his companions were sanctified.

Consequently, because of its living Christian faith and its aggressive spirituality, Armenia was a natural ally of Byzantium. The dominant policy of the Armenian nation was to pursue the victory of Christ's religion first within itself and then in the civilized world around it. The Armenians during this period were the foremost protagonists in the East, of the idea of a single universal Christian state embracing the known world of the times.

The Persians were cognizant of this fact and pro-Byzantium attitude of the Armenian people was a cause of

deep misgiving and alarm for Persia. The constant danger of an uprising against the Persian Empire in its western provinces threatened its security. This threat was all the more disquieting to Yezdigerd II because the smaller Christian peoples of the Caucasus, Georgians, Albanians and certain other peoples in the north of Armenia all followed the leadership of Armenia.

Now, in the first year of his accession to the throne, that is, in the year 440, Yezdigerd had won a decisive victory over the Byzantine Empire under Theodosius II. Following this victory, Yezdigerd conducted incessant campaigns for nine long years against the barbarians, who were harassing the Persian Empire in the east and in the northeast. In 449 Yezdigerd concluded these campaigns victoriously and his hands were left free to deal with the arch trouble-maker, Armenia. When therefore Yezdigerd felt secure in the east and in the north, he planned to undertake a radical policy of expansion towards the west, exploiting the weakness of Byzantium, which was being harassed in its turn at this time by the Rumanians and the Hungarians in its northwestern frontiers in Europe.

But in the 5th century an effective and lasting military conquest meant also a religious conquest. Like Byzantium, Persia was a theocratic state, in other words, the king was not only the political head of the nation, but also its religious head. Yezdigerd thought, and quite correctly, that Armenia could not be effectively assimilated without being Zoroastrianized; and the loyalty and the power of Armenia and her allies was necessary for Persia in order to conquer and absorb lands further west.

So therefore King Yezdigerd sent an edict in 449 summoning the Armenians to renounce their Christian religion or else face the dire consequences.

Now, finding the Persians firmly set on their course of world conquest, Vardan, the military leader of the nation, Vassak, the political leader of the nation and Joseph, the religious leader of the nation, decided together to organize a

strong resistance in order to stall the Persian offensive and to develop a counter plan with the purpose of overwhelming the Persian power in the west.

Thus the three leaders began to take steps to form a grand alliance against the Persian Empire. They already had agreements with the Georgians, the Albanians and the other northern nations, and in November 450, Vardan concluded another alliance with the Huns, that is Hephtalites, the north-eastern neighbors of the Persians. At the same time, in July 450, a deputation went to Constantinople to secure Greek cooperation. In August of the same year, that is 450, Vardan himself went to the western provinces of Armenia to get the help of Greek and Armenian leaders in those parts. Later, in September of the same year, a 3rd and therefore a new deputation went to Constantinople to arrange the alliance of Byzantine Greeks.

The purpose of those alliances was to organize a crusade and extend the frontiers of the Christian world further east, even beyond Persia and into Asia. In this way, Vardan undertook the great task of turning the tables against Yezdigerd himself.

Some Eastern historians say that at this period the Armenians were seized by the vision of a super-national state comprising the civilized world of the period and Vardan's plan to bring the Persian Empire into an eventual universal Christian state.

Unfortunately, owing to uncontrollable circumstances, which I am not going to enumerate here, Vardan did not succeed in his plan. As a consequence of this, Vassak took the path of treason and rose against his colleague and blood brother. While Vardan, together with the clergy and his companions and the major part of the Armenian people, preferred martyrdom to the loss of their faith and to treason against the Lord Jesus Christ.

The rest of the story is familiar to you. The battle was fought on the plain of Avarayr and in the unequal struggle, the Armenians lost the battle.

But they won the war. The purpose for which Armenians fought in 451 was realized eventually and Vardan achieved two things. First, he thwarted the Persian scheme of destroying Armenia and Armenian Christianity and pushing westward to crush the Christian Empire of the period. Vardan's sacrifice of his life saved the Christian world from a calamity which was on the point of overtaking Byzantium if Vardan had not stood up against the engineers of that calamity.

Secondly, Vardan succeeded, with his and his fellow martyrs' blood, to establish the Armenian nation once and for all in the Christian faith and fixed the destiny of the nation and the course of its history right to the present moment. After the spiritual and intellectual conversion of the nation, Vardan achieved the political conversion of the nation. While St. Gregory was the spiritual enlightener of Armenia, Vardan himself became the political enlightener of Armenia, as it were, and henceforth Armenia had a Christian policy internally as well as externally.

This policy cost the nation dear in point of material wealth, in point of worldly comfort, even in point of blood, but spiritually, the Armenian nation was enriched and ennobled and became a people who lived by its Christian faith and became one of the leading Christian peoples of the Near East.

Now, the lesson which we must derive from the Vardanians' struggle is that the salvation of the world depends on the kind of policy which Vardan conducted during his time and won. A policy of pure national material interest, which was the only factor in the calculation of Vassak, will only lead the nations of the world to wars and more wars.

The idea of a world state based on Christian principles and divine law was the dream of Vardan. For the last 1500 years, sometimes succeeding and most of the times failing, mankind has tried to follow such a policy. Even now there are various institutions which are trying to realize for the world, the same dream which Vardan dreamt, trying to see the same kind of vision which Vardan saw. It is through

the innumerable efforts of men like Vardan and of people like his followers that in the end the dream will come true. Vardan's vision is or should be our vision today, and unless we, and the peoples of the world, all follow the example of Vardan and of men like him, there is no hope for the world.

Therein lies the value and the significance of the fight which Vardan fought against the Persians. It is our duty to follow in Vardan's footsteps not only as Armenians, not only as the descendants of Vardan and his companions, but also as progressive human beings who put their trust in God and who walk in His ways in order to make this world freer world, a happier world, a nobler world, a more beautiful world.

Let us therefore renew in our minds and in our hearts the same resolution which led Vardan to the Battle of Avarayr. Let the same kind of resolution lead us, Vardan's descendants, as well as others, to the same kind of sacrifice and martyrdom, not necessarily shedding our blood, but doing everything we possibly can, in order to continue the work to which Vardan devoted his life in company with many other great men in the history of mankind.

ARCHBISHOP TIRAN NERSOYAN

"The Armenian Guardian"

October 1951, February 1962

THE FORTY YOUNG MEN OF SEBASTIA

(KARASOON MANGOONK)

They were soldiers of the Roman Imperial army of Cappadocia, from various cities of Lesser Armenia, all of whom were previously converted into Christianity.

During their stationing in Sebastia, Lucius, the duke of Caesarea received a decree from (Emperor) Licianus ordering him to investigate the troops and see if there were any Christians amongst them. Forty soldiers were found to be Christian (though still loyal to the Emperor of Rome).

They were interrogated, and because of their fearless answers, invited upon themselves the wrath of the judge. They were imprisoned, but were strengthened in their faith by a vision of the Lord which came to them.

When Lucius came to Sebastia, the forty young men were again brought before him and were interrogated. Again they made evident their steadfast faith. Even the executioners fell into confusion and started to strike each other when they were ordered to torture the forty. The Christian soldiers would not give up their faith and were put into jail, where they were granted a visitation from heaven.

After a last interrogation to no avail, the forty youths were left naked, neck-deep in the ice-cold water of the lake. It was winter. The waters froze, and their bodies began to crack. One of the forty could not endure this and ran out of the lake to a (Turkish) bath specially made ready for those who might change their minds and deny their Christian faith. He died there immediately.

During the night, a heavenly light shone on the lake and crowns appeared over the heads of the martyrs. Seeing this, one of the guards felt a spiritual change within himself, and threw himself into the lake, filling the place of the missing fortieth soldier.

Toward morning the guards removed the bodies of the forty from the lake, broke their legs with clubs to make them die and then carried them on wagons to the riverside.

The youngest of them being still alive, his mother carried him on her back and followed the wagons until he, too, died on the way.

The guards burned their bodies and threw the remains into the river. The bishop (of the province) saw in his dream upon which shore of the river the remains could be found and had them gathered and buried with honors in the year 316.

The forty young men became the most popular saints of the East. Church fathers, such as St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Ephraem (the Syrian), and especially the Armenian Vardapet Sisianos of Sebastia have written eulogies about them.

A church with 40 cupolas was built in Sebastia in memory of the forty. It was destroyed during the invasion of Tamerlane, the Mongol conqueror (1333-1405). Later the Armenian cemetery in Sebastia was also called “Karagoon Mangoonk” (The Forty Youths) until our time* of office, since it was located on the site of that church.

The lake itself became confined into a small area, in the midst of the Turkish section of the city, where, to keep it from the uncleanness of aliens, it was protected by stone walls built around and above it.

PATRIARCH TORKOM KOUSHAKIAN

“Soorbk yev Donk”

(Saints and Feast Days)

Translated from Armenian by DIRAYR V. DERVISHIAN

- Patriarch Torkom Koushakian was the Primate of the Armenian Diocese of Sebastia, 1907-1913

LENT

To put it very simply, Lent is a period when people who want to be Christians should turn around. This about face is necessary because the natural man is not going in the Christian direction. We must turn from following our own desires and aims, and instead allow God to make the plans in our lives.

In seeking direction we can't depend wholly on ourselves. The most disturbing fact of human existence is that the finest qualities of human nature can serve to bring about evil. The unselfish, generous, sacrificial courage of millions of people has been put at the service of the greatest evil and the utmost cruelty. Genuine idealism and the desire to do good have provided the motive power for the most wicked deeds. St. Paul points up the problem very clearly when he states: "I find it a law, that when we would do good, evil is present with us." (Rom. 7:21)

Since our best intentions often make things worse, we can only conclude that there is some deep-seated mis-direction in human life. If we are sensitive we can see that at the bottom of the problem is the fact that man has wandered from God: we work at cross purposes with God's design for our lives. These actions of ours which do not follow God's design are called sins. Therefore, sin is a corruption of our nature.

There is a belief deeply rooted in the human heart that the corruption of sin requires either punishment or a sacrifice for its cleansing or expiation. Even though this idea has been twisted into all sorts of superstitions, it stands for a fundamental truth of religion. The central idea of a sacrifice is this: "The worshiper makes an offering of some gifts of value which is the act of sacrifice, passes out of his possession and is surrendered absolutely to God. It then becomes as it were charged with divine energy, through it God makes the worshiper 'holy' or 'pure' where he was 'unholy' or 'impure'."

St. Paul teaches us in the Epistle to the Hebrews that Christ's obedience is the perfect fulfillment of the idea of sacrifice and makes every other kind of sacrifice obsolete. Christ's self-dedication to the will of God is the sacrifice by which we are cleansed. His obedience unto death released God's energy in the world to help Christians overcome evil. His sacrifice is the point of action for divine power; from that point in history the creative power of God works upon our nature.

So, the evil we could not make good, God has made good. Individually, it is for us to lay ourselves open to what has been done for us. The sun has risen with healing rays. We have only to stand in the sunshine. If we respond to God's invitation, we lay ourselves open to the working of His Spirit in the deepest places of our being, where the emotions are shaped and the impulses of the will take their rise. Then the changing experiences of life, both pleasant and unpleasant, become in His hands the means of training us in His will. Through such experiences directed by His care, we may grow to be His fellow workers in creation, reconciled to life, to ourselves, and to God Himself.

There are three tried and sure ways of discovering God's way for our life.

First, we must read the Bible frequently and with imagination. The Bible is the story of how God used living people in His service and it gives us insight as to how He can use us today.

Secondly, we must pray and meditate often. Prayer is conversation with God and meditation is enjoying His presence. If we are to know God's way we must talk and listen to Him.

And thirdly, we must worship together with other Christians and take Communion regularly. We need the support of God and other Christians in order to live a good life. Furthermore, the Holy Communion is spiritual food and our spirits need it in order to remain strong.

Thus, we can see that Lent is a period when we must turn around. Turn from our own way and dedicate ourselves to God's path and His purpose for us. It will be only in this way that our lives will take on meaning and we can learn the joy of being Christian.

DENNIS PAPA ZIAN

"The Armenian Guardian" March 1956

WHAT IS LENT?

Great Fast before Easter

It is necessary, perhaps, first, to remark that in the Christian West the word 'Lent' has been reserved for the great fast before Easter, as for other periods of fast, or abstinence. Since Easter is sometimes called Great Easter, the preceding fast is often referred to as Great Lent. In the familiar speech, however, of Christian Western civilization 'Lent' means today, the great fast before Easter.

Anglo-Saxon Derivation

Appropriately, therefore, we discover that the word 'Lent' itself comes from the Anglo-Saxon word meaning 'the lengthening of the days'. Lent, then, to the early Anglo-Saxon migrants to England meant the time at the end of the winter when the days began to lengthen. It came before the pagan festival of spring. When Christian missionaries brought a true understanding of God, they kept the old name for the new Christian great fast before Easter, and called it 'Lent'.

Old Testament Fast

By way of personal act, David, the first great king, fasted, mourned, dressed in sackcloth and his head covered with ashes, when his first child died. He fasted, not only in mourning, but in repentance of circumstances, also, by which he had contributed to his own guilt. And, as a social religious act, the Old Testament is filled with references to proclaiming a period of fast, as an act of national religious repentance, for some unworthy act, or to be God's mercy in time of need.

David's Mourning

In the Old Testament, there was only one compulsory day of complete fast – the Atonement. Voluntary fasting,

however, was regarded as a normal and necessary religious practice. Fasting was self-denial, an act of self-denial of food, for a certain (reasonable) period. Inflicting it upon oneself, one offered it to God as a sacrifice, as a sacrifice for sin, to atone for something, perhaps, or as a way of begging God's mercy in a time of calamity.

Rise of Pharisees

After the persecutions leading to the Maccabean revolt, a very strict religious group, the Pharisees, had adopted the practice of fasting regularly, on two specific days of every week, as a required devotional act. It was required not by the Old Testament, but by the laws of this group.

Christ as Bridegroom

Christ Himself went away to a quiet and lonely spot to pray, and think, fasting by necessity, just before His active ministry. And in the Sermon on the Mount He simply speaks of the way in which one should fast – for God.

When asked, on one occasion, why He and His disciples did not keep the weekly fasts of the Pharisees and of the disciples of John, He explained that it was not fitting to fast while the 'Bridegroom' was present. One does not fast at a wedding feast. But since He was the Messiah, the Redeemer, His ministry, while He was with His disciples and taught them, was a kind of long 'wedding feast', that is, joyous time, for them. (He spoke in a figure of speech, referring only to the 'bridegroom', for the word 'Messiah' involved questions not desirable to raise until His time of offering Himself in voluntary death had come.) However, there follows at once the passage saying that His followers would fast when He was no longer with them (Matth. 9), that is, after His death, resurrection, and ascension.

Fast of Good Friday

The very early Church had, therefore, one universal fast – the day of His death, which was a solemn fast, of the sort of the Atonement, of the Old Testament. However, following the 40 days of His fast in the wilderness, this fast very quickly became one of 40 days before Easter, universally, throughout the Church of early times. Later, several days were added, in the West, as a plea for God's help in a time of famine, plague, and war. And in the East, various similar developments occurred. The Byzantines added some days of partial fast before the 40 days for like reasons. And each region came to have its own way of opening Lent. However, in each case, it was the great fast, the time of self-denial, before Easter.

Relaxation of Fast

Fast meant denying oneself three full meals a day. It meant eating enough to be strong, physically, enough to carry out one's duties. It permitted, that is, a meal in the evening. And, at least by the middle ages, it permitted some kind of refreshment in the morning, or at noon or both. Later, the meal was permitted during the day, with some refreshment in the morning and at night.

Abstinence and Duties

Lent also meant some kind of abstinence – that is, the denial of certain luxury foods. In the West, meat was forbidden in Lent; in the East, meat, oily fish (but non-oily fish was allowed), animal foods, that is, and also olive oil and alcoholic beverage.

In modern times, the specific requirements have developed according to the conditions of time and place.

Now, it was an absolute principle, always, that the money saved in Lent, in not serving so much food, and such rich food, was always given in alms. And the time saved

since fewer hours were spent at meals, was given to prayer. To have done otherwise would have been regarded as defrauding spiritually – as failing in a religious act toward God.

Offering to God

For, it must be clearly realized, the self-denial involved was something offered to God, as a sacrifice made for God, as done with Him in mind. More was done especially later in Lent with the death of Christ in mind. Thus, one's act of self-denial was offered spiritually to God, by way of a sacrifice, as something for Him. The money, therefore, saved, was given to His poor, in alms. And, with the self-denial went prayer, of repentance, and love.

Since it was a spiritual act, it was done joyously, and courageously. It was a part of the Christian's share in the life of Christ, and in the working out, spiritual acts, of the redeeming life of Christ, in time.

Spiritual Meaning is Changeless

Men know more today of the health aspects of diet, etc., and of the psychological value of self-training, and self-control. However, the supernatural efficacy and spiritual expression of Lent have come down to the present with the same meaning as ever.

In the great liturgical phrase of the Christian West, through bodily fasting, (done for Him), God represses vices and evil inclinations and habits, and He lifts up the mind and heart to a nobler and better outlook, and desire. And, with man's perseverance, and through man's devotion, He sheds forth virtue and spiritual strength, and supernatural and spiritual rewards. Lent, then, is an active, living period, spiritually, in which, through man's efforts at self-denial, (fasting), alms-giving, and prayer, God works by grace in the soul, helping the devoted person to repress and overcome evil habits, lifting the mind up to a truer state, filling it with

light and a desire for God and His will. And finally, He pours forth into the life of His devoted ones spiritual and moral good habit, that is, strength of good habit and virtue, and spiritual rewards. Surely, the light work of Lent is a small undertaking compared with such enormous and truly wonderful gifts and effects from God.

Remembering the Redemption

Of course, in all this – it is for God – the intention must be to please Him. And of course, in the weeks closer to Good Friday, one remembers the Redemption, and its wondrous effects, giving thanks to God, Who worked out the salvation of the human race on the wood of the Cross, through which the evil one was overcome and new life arose again in the world, in Christ. And in this remembrance, as one fasts, one is prepared to share spiritually in the spiritual effects of the Redemption, even more fully, as Easter comes.

Helping Others

Thus, in Lent, something is given back to God, of what is owed Him, for our sins. For, by sin after baptism, the Christian puts himself into a state of having failed toward God, so that something is owed to God, by way of spiritual recompense. And, then, the forgotten, the poor, are helped. For, Christ Himself has said that those who fail to clothe the naked, feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty and visit the imprisoned and sick are neglecting Him. “And these will go into everlasting punishment” (St. Matthew 25:46). And, in prayer, the soul grows more closely into union with God. And, finally, through the remembrance in fasting and prayer and almsgiving for a time beforehand of the Cross, the Christian is more deeply and fully prepared in spirit for the coming of Good Friday and Easter.

“The Armenian Guardian” February 1958

WHAT TO GIVE UP IN LENT

1. Give up grumbling ... instead ... in everything give thanks.
2. Give up 10 to 15 minutes in bed ... instead ... use that time in prayer.
3. Give up looking at people's worst points ... instead ... concentrate on their best ones.
4. Give up speaking unkindly ... instead ... let your speech be generous and understanding.
5. Give up your worries ... instead ... trust God with them.
6. Give up hatred or dislike of anyone ... instead ... learn to love.
7. Give up the fear which prevents Christian witness ... instead ... seek courage to speak to others.
8. Give up concentrating on Sunday newspapers ... instead ... study your Bible.
9. Give up TV one evening ... instead ... visit some lonely or sick person.
10. Give up buying anything but essentials for yourself ... instead ... give the money to God's work.
11. Give up judging by appearances and by the standards of the world
12. Give up yourself ... to God.

WORLD CHRISTIAN DIGEST

"The Armenian Guardian" February 1961

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

On Lent

Q. In the Armenian Church what is the rule of fasting and abstinence during Lent?

A. On Saturdays and Sundays no meat or any food containing meat must be had. From Monday through Friday of each of the seven weeks nothing to eat or drink or smoke from rising to noon, and thereafter only vegetables, fruits, grains, cereals, nuts and honey (and their derivatives) may be had. The practice in the case of Saturdays and Sundays has varied. The rule in its literal strictness requires that vegetables, fruits, grains, cereals, nuts and honey be the only diet for even Saturdays and Sundays, the only difference being that on those two days food may be had in the morning also.

Q. For those who honestly find it impossible or impracticable or harmful to abide by this quite severe rule of fasting and abstinence what would you suggest as a milder and more practicable rule to follow?

A. We of course have no general authority to grant dispensations, but simply to express our own opinion as to what ought to be recommended for such cases. We here submit a regimen of fasting and abstinence which we think should be within the capability of all adults and adolescents to observe, as follows:

Sundays – no dietary restrictions, regular meals and all foods may be had;

Saturdays – regular meals may be had but no meat in any form;

Monday through Friday of each week – one full meal and two half meals (together equaling one full meal), no meat in any form, in between meals only water may be had;

Wednesdays and Fridays – at one of the half-meals fish, eggs and dairy products may be had, but at the other

meals only vegetables, fruits, grains, cereals, nuts and honey (and derivatives) may be had;

Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays – at one of the meals only vegetables, fruits, grains, cereals, nuts and honey (and derivatives), but at the other meals fish, eggs and dairy products may also be had.

Q. Apart from Lent and Holy Week what is the rule of the Armenian Church in regard to fasting and abstaining?

A. From Ascension Day to Lent in the Armenian Church abstinence from meat in all its forms and also from fish and all sea food and also from eggs, milk and all dairy products is required on all Fridays and Wednesdays (except from January 6 through 13); also Monday through Friday (five days) of the weeks preceding the great feasts of the Transfiguration of our Lord, the Assumption of the Holy Mother-of-God and the Exaltation of the Holy Cross; and also on the seven days preceding the feast of the Theophany (beginning December 30). In addition there are several other weeks during the year five days of which (Monday through Friday) are all abstinence days. All together about half the days of the year are abstinence days in the Armenian Church, thirty-five days of which, mostly during Lent, are also days of fasting (no food or beverage or smoking whatsoever up to noon).

In a past issue of the “Guardian” and also in another publication, in view of the circumstances and needs of our people in America, we have had the opportunity of presenting a moderate and practicable regimen of fasting and abstinence for Lent and Holy Week. Here we present a correspondingly moderate plan for abstinence during the remainder of the year, as follows:

Abstain from meat in all its forms (beef, veal, pork, lamb, poultry, etc.) and from all foods containing meat:

- (1) On all Fridays of the year (except January 6 and the Friday in Easter Week);

- (2) On the Wednesdays and the Mondays (or the Tuesdays and Thursdays) – three days – of the weeks preceding the feasts of the Transfiguration (the fourteenth Sunday after Easter Sunday), the Assumption (the Sunday nearest to August 15) and the Exaltation (the Sunday nearest to September 14) and of the first week of Advent (which begins with the seventh Sunday preceding January 6)
- (3) On all the seven days preceding January 6 (December 30 through January 5).

VERY REV. MESROB SEMERJIAN
“The Armenian Guardian”
February 1959, August 1963

SUNDAY REST

The first obvious reason why on Sunday we must rest from work and in general from all our ordinary pursuits is to allow ourselves to recuperate and to renew our physical energies, in order to be able to carry on our duties efficiently.

But not only is it necessary to be physically refreshed but above all we need to be spiritually replenished. The need for this will be more fully realized when it is remembered that the work we do during the week is not merely to be looked upon as a means of gaining our livelihood; we must in the first place engage such kind of work which is pleasing to God and which our God-given talents and capabilities will be adequately exercised; and in the actual doing of our work we must do it not for selfish ends but in accordance with the Christian spirit, for the glory of God, for the fulfillment of God's purposes. The same principle holds in performing of all the activities of our life.

Now, to do our work and to live our life for the glory of God and for the fulfillment of His purposes we need spiritual energy, we need power from God. We, of course, pray to God every day during the week and ask Him to give us light and strength. Nevertheless, a much more intensive and prolonged contact with God is necessary in order that our spiritual energies may be fully replenished, our spiritual battery be fully and properly recharged. In order to make this intensive and prolonged contact with God we need plenty of time, we must not be hurried, we must not be anxious about work.

Hence the necessity of resting on Sunday from our ordinary activities, in order to have plenty of time and quiet of mind as well as physical energy to go to church, to attend the celebration of Holy Badarak (coming on time and staying through the whole of it) and to receive the Holy Communion, which, as the term indicates, is the Contact with God, the center and focus of all other contacts with Him. (It would be a fine thing if our people of today returned to the ancient practice of the early Christians of receiving Holy Communion at

every celebration of Holy Badarak instead of receiving only a few times a year).

To realize the full significance and import of the contact with God, again time and energy are needed; there is the Bible and other religious literature to read, there is private or group meditation, prayer and piety to practice at greater length and more intensively than on week days, there are deeds of Charity to be performed. Hence again the need for Sunday rest from ordinary work and activities.

VERY REV. MESROB SEMERJIAN

“The Armenian Guardian”

September 1950, January 1962

THE GOLDEN CHAIN OF THE LENTEN SUNDAYS

There are certain characteristic aspects in the rites, liturgies and other ecclesiastical ordinances of the Armenian Church which seem to be the result of supernatural influence of things rather than the premeditated arrangement of men. But this statement never tends to underestimate or overshadow the wisdom, the sound sense of taste, and the reasoning instincts of our forefathers. On the contrary, it proves the fact that our forefathers were inspired and led by God.

One of these characteristic aspects of the ecclesiastical ordinances is the excellent arrangement of Lenten services, in general, and, in particular, giving a name to each Sunday of the Lenten period Sundays – ascribing to each a special significance.

All the other Christian churches call the Sundays of Lent by numbers: first, second, etc. In the Armenian Church, in addition to these numbers, each Sunday is also called by a proper name, such as the Sunday of Expulsion, the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, etc. Moreover, the name of Each Sunday carries in itself a certain basic Christian truth. Together, these truths form a successive wholeness which is peculiarly a part of the Armenian religious calendar; further, it provides at once instruction to the believers as well as comprehension of the significance implied. In fact, the six Sundays of Lent embrace the whole of human life from birth to death. Altogether they comprise the greatest events in the rise and fall of mankind from the creation to the end of the world.

If we had tried to represent this sequence of Sundays, and the life that they express, in a geographical picture we would have given it the following figure: A summit, anointed with sunshine and freshness, and richly endowed with the blessings of nature. To this figure succeeds an abyss full of darkness and mist. From that abyss, in turn, starts a steep ascent covered with rocks and shrubs, which culminates upon a plateau. This plain or plateau, having the same height

as the first summit, extends through gardens and vineyards cultivated by human labor and toughness. Finally, the plateau rises propitiously and disappears in the blue sky. We do not see the remainder of the figure but the “Seers” say that there is a “Big City” which contains the “Glory of God” and which is adorned with “high walls” and has gates made of precious stones. That city “has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is the light ...” and “nothing unclean shall enter it, nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood” (Revel. 21:16-27).

I assume that this representation said little about the real nature or essence of these Sundays; so let us consider them one by one, and furthermore, consider each one briefly and by itself. Hence, let us see their connections with one another.

Barekendan (Generis, Chapter 2)

Although this Sunday is not a day of Lent (as the five Sundays following it are), the Armenian Church opens the series of Sundays of Lent with Barekendan. To distinguish this Sunday from the other ten Barekendan Sundays, it is called “great” or “Real Barekendan”. The word Barekendan means joyful, happy and vital living. For this reason, the first Barekendan Sunday is marked especially by general festivities, including carnival-dancing, the aim of which festivities being to rearouse in man his sense of vitality and sentiency in commemoration of the onset of the Lenten period.

No other Sunday among the Church Sundays is observed so conscientiously as this one, though corrupted from its original meaning. It may be assumed that these festivities are due, perhaps, to the realization of the onset of the forty to fifty days of Lent. Consequently, people would be making the most out of the occasion thus presented to gorge upon food and otherwise to enjoy themselves. This opinion, however, is only partly correct.

In fact, Barekendan commemorates the happy, care-less and innocent life of the ancestors of Mankind – Adam and Eve – in Paradise. This idea is eloquently expressed in the hymn (sharagan) of Barekendan day: “The Word, of the essence of the Father and co-existent with the Holy Spirit, joined his own image with our earthly nature and adorned it with glory and placed it in the garden of delight. Therein man joyfully exulted in gladness without grief, for he beheld God always coming down into the garden, through whom his soul was impressed by the radiance of the divine light. Therefore pray for us, O Mary Mother-of-God, to thine only-begotten Son that he may please to grant unto us, as unto the malefactor, to inherit again the glory of the paradise.”

This Sunday, besides reminding us that man is created happy and put in a happy environment, suggests also the idea that man is destined to everlasting happiness. The Holy Bible, as well as man’s experience, testifies to the truthfulness of this idea. A child under normal conditions (not perfect or ideal conditions) is the happiest creature in the universe. His happiness is seldom dependent upon outsiders but springs from within his little self. A heap of sand is enough to make him happy for hours. The mere appearance of a butterfly suffices to set his heart a-tremble with boundless enjoyment. It is as if every thing in nature exists to make him happy.

Indeed, a child truly comprises in himself and symbolizes the infancy of the human race. And, to be sure, the days in Paradise of Adam and Eve – our ancestors – remind us all somehow of the attractions of our own childhood and the parabolic beauty of such projections, all found to be recorded in the first pages of the Bible. The day when the child starts to distinguish between “good and evil”, the moment “his eyes are opened” and he “knows that he is naked” he begins to lose his innocence of childhood and his happiness as well.

The next Sunday will explain this idea more.

Sunday of Expulsion (Genesis 3:1-24)

The story and the meaning of the Second Sunday of Lent is the continuation of the Barekendan. This Sunday is dedicated to the loss of man's happiness and his "expulsion from paradise". The hymn (sharagan) of the day points up that idea sympathetically:

"O Lord, who didst commit first in paradise the law of holy abstinence to the first-created, who broke it by tasting the fruit and thereby tasting the bitterness of sin and death, grant unto us that we may taste the sweetness of thy commandments. We have been smitten in our souls by the Enemy with diverse wounds of sin, and in our manifold infirmities we are in need of thee, the lover of mankind, to relieve our pains; therefore, O Christ, that lovest mankind, heal us".

The real cause of man's expulsion from paradise was not because he ate from the forbidden fruit; our poor ancestors were already punished for that sin, when after "eating from the fruit they knew that they were naked", which means that they knew they had lost something, that is, in a general term, their innocence, the greatest and the first loss a human being usually undergoes. Hence, they tried stupidly to cover up this loss of innocence by sewing fig leaves together and making themselves aprons". Besides, they felt the poisonous feeling of "fear" in their hearts and "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden".

Are these not common and daily phenomena in human life? I suppose you could hardly find a man who has not in some way or other experienced the same event in his life; the man whose conscience is stained with evil does not like to meet God, but rather hold off from the places and persons which remind him of the presence of God. Moreover, the man of the present-day, perhaps much more insolent and aggressive, far surpasses the first man's and quarrels with God and everything remindful of Him. The greatest motive of the anti-God, anti-religion and anti-clerical struggle is the result of the stupid effort of men to escape God's presence.

The “naked” man does not permit himself to admit the existence of God, religion and clergy. In fact, at bottom, the loss of innocence is the greatest punishment man could suffer, because in reality he is always in the presence of God, since he is forced to combat against Him. That anti-God conflict is similar to the act of the person in mythology who was condemned to the everlasting but fruitless work of filling a holed barrel.

Every sin already contains in itself its penalty. But the expulsion from paradise has a different motive. When God forbids mankind from anything, He is not doing it in mere caprice, but because it is harmful for man. God being the architect of the universe and of human life, knows what is harmful for man and therefore He cautions him saying: “Thou shall not commit adultery”, “Thou shall not kill”, “Thou shall not bear false witness”, and other like commandments. Because, finally, it is man himself who is harmed by such acts, either he who commits them or against whom they are committed.

It is also true that any sin is a kind of contempt or at least negligence to the wisdom, knowledge and the almightiness of God. When He “says”, no one should doubt it, since it is the absolute truth. What God “says” in the universe “is done” – “and the Lord said ‘Let there be light’ and there was light”. This phenomenon of God’s word must be repeated in man’s life with this difference only that there must be cooperation on the part of man. To be indifferent to what God says or – still worse – to disobey Him knowingly means to elevate oneself, his intelligence and his will above those of God’s. This is the most unpardonable pretension on the part of man. God’s verdict is clear in this respect: “I don’t give my glory to others” (Is. 42:8). What belongs to God only – infinite intelligence, almightiness, etc. – can not be passed to any one else; that is a religious impossibility.

One who pretends to elevate his intelligence to that of the wisdom of God, shall subject himself to the greatest punishment that man can be subjected to. “The angels that did not keep their own position” but aspired for more “have been kept by Him in eternal chains in the nether gloom until

the judgment of the great day” (Jude 6). And again: “How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, Son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; ... I will make myself like the most high’” (Isaiah 14:12-14).

The many kinds of sin, in the final analysis, are found to be disobedience to God’s command or, in other words, knowing or unknowing contempt for God. And, if viewed from another angle, this means considering oneself better, wiser and more capable than God and to elevate self over Him. This is an unpardonable guilt for the limited creature which is man; for this reason the punishment meted out to him is severe and serious.

Therefore, Expulsion Sunday reminds us, besides the tragedy of the loss of innocence known to our forefathers, of the fact that each sin contains in itself its condign punishment. Moreover, every sin intrinsically means the disobeying of the obvious Will of God; which will call upon the sinner still another bitter punishment, namely, deprivation from happiness, offered by God, and expulsion from His presence. However, the goodness of God does not allow that man lose everything forever. He gives man hope and provides him with the opportunity to regain his “Lost paradise”.

This spirit of the mercifulness of God is represented in the next Sunday of the Lenten period, the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, which contains a most thrilling parable.

Sunday of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)

The features that have been mentioned as being characteristic of the previous two Sundays, namely, happiness and its loss, are repeated also by this Sunday. The sole idea of this Sunday is the ascension; man’s rise from fall and his return to the place from where he was expelled. This Sunday and the two Sundays following it take their names from the main parables included in the lections of those days.

According to the central parable of this Sunday, the “younger son” of a happy family desires to leave his father’s home for a far country. As Adam and Eve, so also this young man was not satisfied with what he had and enjoyed. In other words, this boy does not know and consequently can not appreciate the value of what he owns and therefore he wishes after the pleasures of a “far country”.

One of the tragedies of human life is the fact that a man does not appreciate the valuable heritage he possesses and enjoys, unless he loses it. All of us may have the same experience regarding our health, or position or our beloved ones. Thus, only after losing his sight a person can understand how essential an organ his eyes were. The very death of a beloved one proves to us how vital was his presence. The same is also true for the spiritual values. Only after losing your innocence you feel how sweet it had been, about which perhaps you had never given a thought to. And it is under such circumstances that one can notice the goodness of the evil. By this we may partly understand the cause of the existence of evil itself, allowed (or even destined) by Providence and making reference to its beneficial role.

The Prodigal Son lost almost everything he had – riches, beauty and honor. He had willingly lost the presence of a father and the sweetness of a home. He who had started his expectations to obtain a better life found himself in dire poverty and in the company of swine. (To no where else does the company of prostitutes lead man). All these miseries, however, made it possible for him to find the most important thing, that is, the appreciation of what he had enjoyed previously. Besides being starved the Prodigal Son is now immensely in need of his father’s love and is longing for his home. His father’s love, which he feels now only in its entire purity, attracts him as does a magnetic force. He desires to be with his father and family – if not even as a “son”, at least as a “hired servant”. The discovery of the values he has lost, forces him to become roused and forsake the company of the pigs. The center of gravity of the parable lies

in these words: “I will rise and go to my father”. These words contain the whole meaning of the Sunday. The rest is a familiar story.

The Prodigal Son, restored in his former position and happiness, now is minded of what he possesses, that is, his father’s riches. We may say, he has become a steward managing the properties of the family.

Hence, next Sunday contains the parable of the Steward.

Sunday of the Steward (Luke 16:1-13)

In the meaning, too, of this fourth Sunday the same familiar ups-and-downs are repeated in different forms. Here, too, are high office and its eventual loss. The steward is the highest class functionary of the great and noble families of ancient times; he controls the entire finances of the family and administers almost all the affairs of the house.

In this parable, the sin of the steward is the same as that of the prodigal son: spend-thrift-ness; that is, using for other purposes properties entrusted to him. Both the prodigal son and the steward spend the belongings of others for their personal use.

The parable of the steward is rightly considered to be one of the most difficult parables of the Gospel to understand. In order to understand this parable one has to differentiate as between the explanation of the “sons of light”, from the “sons of this world”. There exists for Jesus but two classes of men. The first class is composed of those who live just for this world and according to its laws. The people of the second class are those who live for heaven and consequently in accordance with the laws of God. By this parable, Jesus takes an example from the life of the “sons of this world” to give the “sons of light” a lesson and instruction.

The steward of the Gospel is a fraudulent person and is qualified as “unrighteous”. He is a typical “son of this world”, very clever, smart and far-sighted. He is a man who knows how to make profit from all the opportunities provi-

ded him for personal benefit. He wastes the possessions of his landlord for his personal use, instead of using them for the family. The landlord, having been informed of the fraud, decides to dismiss him and, therefore, invited him to render an accounting. The shrewd functionary uses even this critical situation for his material security. To gain their friendship, he discounts the debts of his landlord's debtors so that, when he is put out of office, he may be welcomed to their houses. The landlord learns about this new unfaithfulness, too, but he acts like a "gentleman son of the world". The Gospel says: "The Lord commended the unjust steward for his prudence".

The parable ends at this point and Jesus, in further elucidation, makes this remark: "For the sons of this world are wiser in their own generation than the sons of light; and I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations". What Jesus wants to say is that if the sons of the world use all the means under their disposition to gain and keep their worldly lives in security, why should not the "sons of light" be equally wise to utilize the gifts and opportunities granted them by God to obtain and guard the life of heaven?

Hence, the Sunday of the Steward also urges us to use "the mammon of unrighteousness", that is, material fortune and brain, to buy "eternal tabernacles" or mansions. Besides, the ability to use "the mammon of unrighteousness" correctly is a guarantee that we will be able to utilize beneficially "the true one", that is, the lasting riches – our spiritual capacities. For if we can not make use of the material which is "foreign" to our nature, no one will give us that which is "our own", namely, the "talents" of the "sons of light".

The central instruction of this parable is encouraging also for those who, though "not far from salvation", but being occupied by worldly problems, can not yet devote time to lay up spiritual treasures for themselves. We may have friends in heaven by performing benefactions in this world; for each person is an intercessor for his benefactor by the

throne of God. As the clever steward made use of the most troublesome time of his life to secure his personal wellbeing, so also any one in his last days can secure his everlasting happiness through a heart-stirring benefaction, provided he repents for the injustices he may have wrought. If a robber could inherit paradise during his agonies of death by simply showing a sincere sympathy with the One co-crucified with him, so also can everyone achieve the same salvation if only he will learn how to use his brain and his conscience...

However, if one of the conditions for our admittance into the “eternal tabernacles” is the good management of the worldly riches, derived from a good stewardship, the other condition is the prayer.

To that idea is dedicated the next Sunday, the Sunday of the Judge.

Sunday of the Judge (Luke 18:1-8)

This Sunday is dedicated to the idea of prayer, the aim of which is explained in the first lines of the Gospel reading of the day: “And He (Jesus) told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray, and not lose heart”.

The judge of the parable (by which the Sunday is named) is another “son of this world”, who “neither feared God nor had regard for man”. The other person in the scene is a widow, the victim of an iniquity, who asks the judge to do her justice. But the judge pays her no attention because he cannot make a profit from her. The widow, however, tirelessly presses her complaints before the judge, who, like the steward of the previous Sunday, was said to be “unjust”. The judge finally renders a decision only to rid her of him and sends her away.

The widow is a symbol of humanity which feels itself very weak in face of passions and other external violence. The human being, therefore, earnestly appeals to God to save him of those forces. Very often God is “long-suffering”, that is, He does not answer our prayers so quickly and in the way we

ask him to. But the parable teaches us “not to lose heart”. If a godless and impudent judge finally submits to the supplication of the widow, shall not God, the good and the righteous, hear and “avenge His servants who cry to Him day and night?”

The teaching of this parable is encouraging particularly for those people who are suffering and for those who are persecuted in their search for justice. But it is not enough to pray just saying: “Deliver me, O Lord, from evil men; preserve me from violent men” (Psalms 140:1). It is necessary to be and remain a “servant” of God, because to such servants God has promised the wrath of His “vengeance”. Those who declare themselves in word or deed beyond the laws of God, can not secure His protection; but those who stay in His service and cry: “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth”, may receive an answer, sometimes, such as “rest a little longer”, for God has promised that He will avenge the blood of His servants on their torturers (Revel. 6:10-11, 19:2).

Hence, beyond the faithful administration of the problems of mammon and life, earnest and perseverant prayer is one of the fundamental conditions by which a person might remain in his Father’s house and in the position he has there regained.

The last line of the parable concludes with the meaning of the Sunday, which is the seeking of justice through prayer. Further, it establishes the essential condition without which prayer could never be serving its goal. That fundamental condition is Faith.

In the meantime, however, the curtain is opened and we face the next Sunday: “Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will He find faith on earth”?

Sunday of Advent (Matt. 22:34-23:39)

To close the golden chain of the Sundays of Lent, it would be impossible to find a more appropriately meaningful

name for it, than the Sunday of Advent. This closure is particularly meaningful for the fact that the Sunday of Advent is dedicated not only to the Second Coming of Christ but also to His First Coming, as stated by the hymn (sharagan) of the day.

“The mystery of thy coming thou didst foretell through the prophets of Israel, who thou didst choose after Moses; they spake through the Holy Spirit in manifold examples; O Saviour, grant us mercy and forgiveness of our sins. When the latter years drew nigh, as the seers had announced, and thou, our Saviour, did arrive in the fullness of time, thou didst appear among men having put on the form of a servant. On the sixth day thou didst create Adam in the lordly image; but he kept not the commandment and was divested of the robe (of innocence); whereas thou, O new Adam, didst visit the lost one during the sixth age.”

This Sunday, in commemorating the First Coming of Jesus, aims at refreshing our minds of the fundamental truth that our rise from fall and our restoration may be possible only by the incarnation of Christ and by other ministrations attached to it. The hymn (sharagan) of the Sunday of the Prodigal Son says: “We bless thee, O Father eternal of thine only-begotten Son, who thou hast sent for the return of the lost sheep; turn us also from sin through the passion of thy Son. We exalt thee, O thou Word and Light, who didst find thy lordly image by the light of thy candle and didst restore same; restore us, who are fallen in sin, through thy holy passion.”

The main idea, moreover, contained in the Gospel Reading of the day’s Divine Liturgy is the fact that Christ was the expected Messiah and the Saviour of mankind. Jesus himself asks: “What do you think of Christ (the Messiah)? Whose son is he? ...” Then with a long series of “woe”s He scolds bitterly the Pharisees and the scribes, by which scolding, the same time, He states the supremacy of his authority and reveals who He is. Only from the last few lines of a long lection does he indicate His Second Coming: “For I tell you,

you will not see me again until you say ‘Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord’”.

All the books of the New Testament ascertain that there will be a Second Coming of Christ, who will come this time not as a gentle and lowly Saviour, but as a dreadful and righteous judge. He will come in the glory of His Father with the retinue of angels to judge humanity as the shepherd who separates sheep from goats.

Our eternal fate will be decided by the good deeds that we have or have not done. The “everlasting” life will be inherited by those who have given food to the hungry, a hand to the fallen, and consolation to the afflicted. Those who have not performed such charities will be deprived of the highest reward. It is not said, however, what will be the fate of those who have grabbed the food of the hungry or those who have caused suffering all about them. Even the “miracles” that we might have wrought in the name of Christ, even these will not be considered to be sufficient for gaining eternal life, because we have still failed to reconcile a single broken heart.

The most significant sequence of the Lenten Sundays comes to an end by the mention of the greatest drama of the universe. But the drama of life does not end with the Second Coming of Christ and with the scenes related to it. On the contrary, the Second Coming of Christ opens a new era, a new heaven and a new earth, where there will be neither “Lent nor the necessities that make Lent indispensable”. “Joy, gladness and justice” will then dwell there. The inhabitants of the place will be only “the conquerors”, that is, the conquerors over evil.

VERY REV. S. V. KALOUSTIAN

“Hayastanyaitz Yegeghetzy”, (Vol. XIV, No. 3)

Translated from Armenian by DIRAYR V. DERVISHIAN

“Oshagan” – 1955, No. 8-12

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS On Requiem Services During Lent

Q. Is it proper during Lent to have requiem (“Hokehankist”) for our deceased loved ones?

A. During Lent we are collectively under penance. For that reason our diet and mode of living in general are subjected to drastic limitations and deprivations. By the same token our worship during Lent takes on primarily a penitential character with the emphasis being on our need to repent and be purified and forgiven our sins, so that the privilege and duty of interceding for other is reduced to a minimum, although not entirely withdrawn. The matter is decided actually by the principle of “first things first”, so that the amount of frequency of intercession (which is secondary during Lent) should be determined accordingly.

In regard to requiems during Lent it would certainly fall within the limits of minimum intercession to hold the fortieth-day requiem (both remembrance in the Divine Liturgy or Mass and a concluding requiem service) for a newly deceased person. Indeed it would be mandatory to observe this requiem. The first-anniversary requiem might also be observed during Lent. Subsequent anniversaries however, if they should occur during Lent, ought to be observed after Lent has passed.

“The Armenian Guardian” September 1961

Q. Is it always necessary to have the additional requiem service following the Badarak? Isn't it often sufficient to have the commemoration of the deceased in the Badarak only, especially since the commemoration in the Badarak is supreme commemoration?

A. As explained above the requiem service which follows the Badarak in reality corresponds to the cemetery service. And since according to our Mashtotz or Ritual Book

a special or individual cemetery service is not required after the first anniversary of the passing of the deceased, it should be limited to commemoration during the Badarak only (which is the important commemoration anyway).

For cemetery service and commemorations of all the deceased in general, the Church has provided five special days in the year, namely the second day of each of the five Tabernacle Feasts which are Christmas, Easter, the Transfiguration, the Assumption of Virgin Mary and the Exaltation of Holy Cross. Those of the deceased since whose passing more than one year has elapsed may be commemorated in the cemetery-service or requiem following the Badarak on these days (or on the days observed in their stead, as for example, in America, on the Sunday following Easter Sunday).

“The Armenian Guardian” May 1959

Q. What is the significance of the “Karrasoonk” of a newly deceased person?

A. The word “karasoonk” means “period of forty days” and in this case refers to the forty-day period of quiet living (note that we did not say “mourning”) in respect to the newly deceased. During this period the family of the deceased remains prayerfully mindful of their departed beloved one. This does not mean that they must not attend church services, as erroneously supposed, but that they must refrain from participating in gay or exciting or noisy gatherings and in general from any activity which may unnecessarily disturb their quiet. This forty-day period is concluded with a solemn remembrance of the soul of the newly deceased in the Divine Liturgy followed by a special requiem service over the grave of the deceased. (It has now become customary to have this requiem service in the church immediately following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, but properly and originally it is a cemetery service, and in ancient times it was most probably observed not in the church proper but in the narthex

or vestibule of the church in inclement weather when it was not convenient to go to the cemetery, the narthex in such cases representing the cemetery). The solemn commemoration of the newly deceased in the Divine Liturgy (the Badarak) at the end of the forty-day period corresponds to the Funeral Mass among Roman Catholics. With us the Mass (the Badarak) is celebrated at the end of the forty-day period instead of on the day of the funeral and it is usually a regular Sunday Mass instead of being a private or special Mass on a weekday.

“The Armenian Guardian” May 1959

Q. Why is it that the Church prays for the deceased while at the same time teaching that it is our faith and works on earth that determine our eternal state in the world to come?

A. It is important at the outset to point out that the Church does not pray for all who have passed from this life; she prays only for those whose eternal salvation has been secured through faith in Jesus Christ and through consequent membership in His holy catholic and apostolic Church which is mystically His Body. In other words the Church prays only for those who at the time of death were in union with her and with Jesus Christ. Therefore not only deceased non-Christians and deceased heretics and sectarians are deprived of the prayers of the Church but also those members of the Church who by committing serious sins and failing to repent for them by the time of their death have forever become alienated from the Church and from Christ.

The Church does pray however for those who died in union with her, with true faith and in the grace of God, even though they may not have been perfected and passed away with unrepented minor sins on their consciences. It is for the forgiveness of minor sins that the Church prays in the case of those of her members who have passed away in union with her, the idea being that God will not eternally condemn those

of His children who have been essentially good Christians and have died with only minor sins on their consciences. The principle, then, is that those who have died with only minor sins on their consciences will be deprived of heaven only for a time (which of course in itself is a tremendous loss), but those who have died with serious or mortal sins on their consciences will be deprived of heaven eternally, and for them no amount of prayer will do any good.

“The Armenian Guardian” April 1958

Q. What is the significance of the “hokejash”, the meal usually had after a funeral?

A. The “hokejash” appears to have been originally a charity meal served by the family of the deceased primarily for the poor people of the community in benefit of the soul of the newly deceased. The idea is that the souls of the faithful departed (who passed from this life free from serious or mortal sins but very probably with certain minor sins which still need to be forgiven) can benefit not only from our prayers offered in their behalf but also from our charitable works done on their behalf – hence the serving of a charity meal to the poor.

In addition such a meal would give occasion to numerous people to utter a prayer for the soul of the deceased, since all those who partook of the meal would say “Asdvadz loosavoreh hokin” – “May God illuminate his (or her) soul”.

It is indeed deplorable that what started out as a charity meal has now degenerated into a merely social meal. This deterioration has been aggravated by our inability or unwillingness to adjust to the change in our modern American society. The change being that we no longer have beggars roaming the streets and our poor are cared for in ways more dignified than in the past and in other parts of the world. This being the case it would be highly commendable if instead of the costly and usually unnecessary meals (very often served in the mid-afternoon or late mid-afternoon, well in advance

of normal supertime) a substantial donation were made by the family to some worthy charitable cause or causes and the social meal were limited to a minimum number of necessary participants.

“The Armenian Guardian” May 1959

Q. Does the Church allow Christian burial to be given to one who has committed suicide?

A. Suicide is a very serious sin, being a grievous act of rebellion against the Creator who gave life to the person so that he might know, love and serve God for his own salvation and for the glory of God. The suicide by putting an end to his life is actually telling God, “I don’t love you and I don’t want to serve you and do your will”. And since there is no possibility of repenting for suicide, because of the very nature of that sin, the person who has committed it remains in mortal sin forever. No amount of prayer can help him. Therefore it would be vain and sinful to pray for a suicide; hence no Christian burial can be given him.

Exceptions might be made only in cases where it was generally known that the person who committed suicide had been mentally unbalanced and apparently did not fully realize the gravity of his act, but in such cases the body must not be taken to church. Similar leniency would be shown to one who committed an act of suicide but not dying immediately expressed true repentance before dying.

VERY REV. MESROB SEMERJIAN
“The Armenian Guardian” April 1958

HOLY WEEK IN JERUSALEM

Jerusalem is the cradle of the truest religion of the world – Christianity.

After the conversion to Christianity of the Armenians, Jerusalem became the holy city for us, and Christian Armenians began to go to Jerusalem.

Later, pilgrimages increased so much that by the seventh century the Armenians had established some 70 monasteries and churches in Palestine. In the time of the Crusades Armenian colonies flourished there, and the Armenian Kings of Cilicia helped a great deal to protect the holy places. Today, we own one third of the holy places in the Holy Land.

Easter Week begins with Palm Sunday (Dzaghgart). The Saturday before Palm Sunday, a solemn entry is made at 2:45 p.m. by His Beatitude the Armenian Patriarch into the Basilica (the great temple around the chapel which houses the Tomb of our Lord). Then Evening Hour services are performed in the Holy Virgin Church, which is situated in the Armenian section one flight up in the gallery of the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre.

Those who reach the convent or any other monastery before Palm Sunday will notice an onion hanging near the kitchen, and of the seven feathers which had been pierced in it, one is left, to remind the people that only one more week of fasting remains. In the forty days Lent period until Easter, the only foods allowed to be eaten are cooked vegetables and fruits; meat and dairy products are forbidden.

In the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Holy Mass is celebrated at 9:00 a.m. in the Armenian gallery. At 11:30 the procession comes down and joins the processions of the Coptic and Syrian Churches, turning three times around the chapel containing the Tomb of our Lord. Priests in colorful vestments and holding relics, make a very impressive procession that day, when the celebrant of the day, usually a high

church dignitary, re-enacts the glorious entry of Christ into the Holy City. The Church is filled with palms and flowers.

Sunday afternoon at 4 p.m. is the service of Turnpatzek (literally meaning “Open the Door”) which has the meaning that, after the penance of Lent, we the cleansed sinners are begging to be readmitted to the Kingdom of God. Turnpatzek contains the mystery of the Second Coming of Christ and the Day of Judgment. Heaven, which has been closed to the sinners, is opened by repentance and belief in Christ, with the withdrawal of the curtain. All the altars of the church, as well as the pictures, are covered with curtains, and usually pilgrims and believers become god-fathers for the opening of the curtains.

Great Monday (Avak yergooshapti) has the usual routine of prayer in the holy places. In the Church of Holy Sepulchre, holy Mass is celebrated in the early morning at 2:00 a.m.; in the Church of Virgin Mary near Gethsemane, at 8:00 a.m., and Evening Hour service at 3:00 p.m.

Great Tuesday is dedicated to the Wise Virgins. Holy Mass is celebrated in the chapel of St. John, in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Great Wednesday is dedicated to the betrayal of our Lord.

Maundy Thursday is the start of the great continuous celebrations and divine services. Solemn Episcopal Holy Mass is celebrated in the Cathedral of St. James (dedicated to the two James: the Apostle and the so-called brother or cousin of Christ), in memory of the institution of the sacrament of Holy Communion. It is the most gorgeous of celebrations, and very valuable and antique vestments, interwoven with gold and silver, are used to show that the best is used for the glory of the Lord.

Besides the Cathedral of St. James, there is the parish church of the Archangels, wherein similar regular services take place. This latter church is for the local Armenians called kaghakatzi (citizens – one of who is the humble writer

of these lines), whose grandfathers have emigrated from Armenia to protect the Holy places.

In the afternoon at 2:30, again in St. James Cathedral, there is conducted the ceremony of the Washing of the Feet (Vodunluva), is conducted in commemoration of Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet on the Eve of the Last Supper. All the high government dignitaries, church and religious leaders, foreign consuls, and ambassadors attend this ceremony, having their designated chairs in the chancel of the cathedral. The Anglican Bishop has the privilege of reading a lection in English from the Bible. The Patriarch does the washing of the feet of 12 clergymen, beginning with the archbishops and bishops and then the vartabeds.

The services collectively called Hesgoom start in the evening at 7 p.m. and. Here the entire Passion Week story with the exception of the Resurrection is read from all the Gospels. The last part of these services (which end at 1 a.m.) is called the Khavaroom, which signifies Christ's expiration on the Cross, when total darkness prevailed, with the earthquake that tore the curtain of the great synagogue into two parts.

Good Friday is a silent mourning day. In the morning the third, sixth and ninth Hour of the Day services are performed. In the afternoon from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. at St. James Cathedral the Burial takes place. Flowers from a wooden tomb-altar are then given to the attendants.

Holy Saturday is the big day. From early morning, crowds with candles rush to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher to be near the door when it opens. Some of the people have already slept in the church. Pilgrims have to secure tickets in advance to be allowed to go in, because by 8:00 a.m. the Holy Sepulchre compound becomes impassable. A strong police force controls the situation, and pilgrims are led safely to special quarters in the Basilica.

At 8:00 a.m. the Armenian Chief Dragoman, accompanied by clergy, proceeds from the Cathedral of St. James to the Holy Sepulcher. The privilege of opening the door is

given to the Armenians; so when the procession arrives the Armenians open the door solemnly.

At 1:00 a.m., which is considered early Sunday, the Armenian and Greek sacristan priests enter the chapel of the Tomb of the Lord. The chapel is adjoined by a small vacant room. First the Greek priest enters, and then Armenian follows. They light their candles from the single lit lamp of that day. As the entrance and the standing place is narrow, the Armenian priest has to withdraw first, so he delivers the light through the small window of the room adjoining the chapel. Runners take the light up to the second floor of the Armenian Gallery, where the Patriarch is seated. Then the Patriarch raises the bunch of candles handed to him and blesses the people, saying: "Christ is risen from the dead". All the people light their candles. Christ, the light of the world, is glorified there symbolically by that great illumination.

Then the Holy Mass (Jrakalooitz Badarak) is celebrated in the Church of the Virgin Mary in the Armenian Gallery. That evening Lent is broken with a fish dinner.

In the early morning of Easter Sunday Holy Mass is celebrated in front of the Tomb of Christ, with solemnity. In the afternoon, the solemn processional service of Antasdan, blessing of the four corners of the world, is held in the great courtyard of St. James Convent. These are really impressive and unique outdoor services, spreading the blessings of Easter on lands and villages, kingdoms and people.

A. V. P.

"The Armenian Guardian" January 1956

EASTER IN MY HOME TOWN

Aleppo, Syria, is predominantly a Moslem city. Yet fifty thousand Armenians living there celebrate Easter in a virtually Christian setting.

For several thousand Armenian school children, there is a six day holiday beginning on Maundy Thursday. For breadwinners, varying in age between sixteen and sixty-six, Easter holiday means taking off Sunday and Monday. Even the Moslem boss honors this tradition.

While most Armenian children are busy playing marbles or soccer in the streets and fields. Some barefoot, others in ragged clothes, mothers work hard all during Holy Week, to prepare the big meal for Easter Sunday. Easter eggs are hard boiled and dyed with onion skins. Baskets full of "koulouncha" are baked at the neighborhood bakery, filling the spring air with pleasant aroma. Fresh white cheese is purchased to be served with koulouncha at breakfast or picnics. In most homes, preparing the dough for koulouncha and shaping the individual pieces with cutters or rolling sticks is the major project, in which every member of the family helps.

Roast or fired chicken is a special treat on Easter Sunday for most Armenian homes. In fact, many Armenians taste chicken hardly once or twice during the year. The fowl is bought alive at the open air markets on Friday or Sunday and killed at home with a large knife. In our home, my mother was the only expert in this unpleasant job. My father's part was to select the hen at the market, bargain about the price and carry the unhappy creature home holding her hanging from the legs.

Religious observances were numerous, depending on the degree of piety of each family. School children at the Armenian parochial schools would greet, with subdued giggles, the bearded parish priest, wearing a black robe and a cone-on-drum shaped headpiece, on his visit to the school auditorium on Wednesday before Easter. His duty was to

line up the several hundred pupils, under the stern eyes of the principal, and conduct their public confession from the stage. He would invariably use in his introductory remarks the example of the copper utensils of the kitchen, which needed to get fresh coating of enamel twice a year, to look clean and wholesome. Likewise, he would conclude, our hearts would be brightened by confessing and receiving Holy Communion.

School children began the Easter vacation by attending Church on Maundy Thursday at which time they received Holy Communion with their teachers.

Adults would try not to miss Vespers that same night. “Kavaroom” was really a sad and lengthy service with no omissions and deletions. Christ’s betrayal and passion was commemorated by an Armenian multitude who had gone through a similar experience a decade or two before in the deserts of Mesopotamia. All five Armenian Apostolic Churches were packed on this occasion. Late at night, some of the women among the faithful would visit the churches of other denominations after dismissal, to compare the somber looking curtains and paintings.

On Good Friday afternoon, all coffee houses, cinemas and stores were closed in this Moslem city. While, the majority of the populace retired to their homes, Christians crowded their churches once again, to witness the ceremony of burial. Contrary to Armenian tradition, the local Armenian churches allowed the pagan custom of carrying a casket-like box in procession during this ceremony, and zealous ladies and children would create a commotion in church by pushing each other trying to pass under “Christ’s casket”.

On Easter Sunday, Divine Liturgy was performed rather early. The priests hurried to the traditional home blessing visits, each one accompanied by an acolyte who carried a bagful of incense and freshly baked Nushkars. Every Armenian home kept a “mangal” of charcoal fire, in spite of the mild weather. The visiting Der Hyre would drop some incense in the fire, and while the sweet-smelling smoke filled the room, he and the acolyte would chant the proper

Easter hymn, read the Gospel passage and bless the family. It seemed to me that the Der hyre was always in a hurry not taking time to relax a few minutes and talk with us. My mother would explain, after the priest left the house with the usual offering given to him and the acolyte that the Der Hyre had hundreds of homes to visit between Easter and Ascension Day.

The men had a social obligation on Easter Sunday and Monday, that of paying visits to neighbors, relatives, and friends, to congratulate each other and wish happy Easter. Most of these visits were made on foot, which was good exercise, but was rough on the shoes. Not all of Aleppo streets were paved then. Where the poor Armenians had congregated on the outskirts of the city, there were miles of dusty and muddy streets with no decent sidewalks. Yet, for friendship's sake, Armenian men kept the spirit of Easter alive, as they entered the friend's home, they uttered the hearty and sincere "Krisdos Hariav ee Merelotz" to which the lady of the house, or the children responded with "Orhnial eh Haroutunen Krisdosi". Cognac or raki was served with salted almonds or candy. Sometimes oriental coffee would be added to this, if the visitor was not in hurry. For those young boys who accompanied their fathers on these interesting visits, the lady of the house had red Easter eggs and koulouncha, which made the boys' pockets bulge. Oh, yes, you could tell it was Easter by just looking at the way Christian children were dressed as you crossed the wider streets. Even the poorest children that went about in torn and patched rags had some bright looking outfit, no matter how cheap the material was. The variety in color of children's clothes matched the color of wild flowers blooming at that time in the cornfields in and around Aleppo.

Speaking of cornfields, there were quite a few adjoining the Armenian and the rest of the Christian cemeteries. At sunrise on Easter Monday, those cemeteries became live with thousands of visitors. The few automobile owners could hardly move through the crowds making this

sad pilgrimage on foot. Priests were busy conducting short memorial services on request. Sometimes two or three families would get hold of the helpless Der Hyre simultaneously, insisting that he bless the graves of their beloved before moving further. He had to take one at a time, which was a decision to make, and quite often ignorant and selfish mourners would feel hurt and charge the priest with discrimination.

At the entrance of the cemetery, there were always the inevitable peddlers of soft drinks or lablaboo. Children, who were not interested in mourning the dead would run away from their parents, to read poetically composed epitaphs on gravestones, to catch butterflies, or gather wild flowers in the cornfields. Their newly polished shoes or sandals would look muddy in a short while. Groups of young unmarried men would wander around, trying to catch the eyes of bashful young girls in the crowd. For them, it was some sort of a picnic or a hike, in spite of the black clusters of crying mourners that surrounded fresh graves. No matter how indifferent or callous you were, your heart would be torn by just listening to the bemoaning uttered by disconsolate mothers and wives.

Yet, Easter brought new hope and joy to Armenians of all ages. Aleppo Armenians went on struggling for a livelihood, raising large families and facing an uncertain future, with hope of Resurrection alive in their hearts.

REV. ARTEN ASHJIAN

“The Armenian Guardian” April 1957

WHAT IS AN EASTER EGG?

Have you ever stopped to think why eggs are used on Easter, and why they are dyed with red color? There are a few symbolic meanings to this.

Easter eggs are dyed with red color symbolizing the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, without which there could not be an Easter. While white lilies, symbol of purity, decorate the altars on Easter day, the glorious feast of the Resurrection receives its meaning from the sacrificial act of the Son of God, who agonizingly, yet willingly shed His blood for the remission of our sins.

Another religious meaning of the egg is its being a symbol of the Holy Trinity, since the egg has three parts: the shell, the yolk, and the white. The number three is used quite extensively in liturgical churches as symbol of the Holy Trinity.

Still another meaning lies in the fact that the egg represents potentiality for life; as the chick breaks the shell of the egg and comes into the world, to life, so the huge and sealed rock of our Lord's tomb rolled open and Jesus came out of it. This, symbolically, explains the significance of the work and mission of Christ, which was to give us "life and abundant life". The giver of ALL life could not remain buried.

It is on this fact of the Resurrection of our Lord that the Christian faith is rooted.

May the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, rise in the hearts of every one of us, by breaking the shell of evil. Amen.

DEACON HOVHANNES KASPARIAN
"The Armenian Guardian" April 1960

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

On Easter

Q. Why does not the Armenian Church follow the Nicene rule of celebrating Easter after Jewish Passover octave as in the Western Church?

A. This question also is worded from the point of view of one who assumes that the Byzantine Church's interpretation of the Nicene rule of the date of Easter is necessarily the correct interpretation. The rule established by the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea determining the date of Easter is that Easter shall occur on the first Sunday following the first full moon following the vernal (Spring) equinox. Accordingly Easter can come on any Sunday from March 22 to April 25 inclusive. The Nicene rule was not directed against celebrating Easter during the Passover octave but against celebrating it on the first day of the Passover, on which day our Lord was crucified, not raised, His rising taking place on the third day thereafter. Since it is a fact that Jesus Himself rose from the dead during the Passover octave (on the third day of the octave or, as some say, on the fourth day) who are we to say, and what right does the Byzantine have to say, that we must wait until that octave is completed before we can celebrate His Resurrection! On the contrary it is most fitting that our Good Friday coincide with or come as close as possible to the first day of the Jewish Passover (on which day our Lord was crucified). The Byzantine Church violates the intent of the rule of the Council of Nicaea by waiting all the eight days (octave) of the Jewish Passover to be completed and thus delaying by as much as five weeks the celebration of Easter; on the other hand the rule of Nicaea was also directed against Jewish practice of sometimes observing the Passover before the vernal equinox, that is before the beginning of Spring. Such that it would happen that some years they would celebrate two Passovers between 'two vernal equinoxes.' The Council of Nicaea provided that this should

never happen in the case of the Christian Easter which was always to come after the beginning of Spring and never before. So the important features of the Nicene rule are that (1) Easter Sunday must never coincide with the first day of the Jewish Passover (the day on which Jesus died) but must always come on a Sunday following the first day of the Passover; and (2) Easter must always follow and never precede the vernal equinox (March 21) even if the Jewish Passover of any year does precede it.

“The Armenian Guardian” December 1964

Q. Did our Lord rise on Easter Sunday with the same body with which He had been crucified on Good Friday?

A. Yes, our Lord rose with His very same Body (Luke 24:38-40, John 20:24-28). However, He did not manifest Himself necessarily in the same way in which He had usually manifested Himself up to His crucifixion. In the first place He did not always make Himself visible but appeared only on certain occasions. Furthermore, He would at times appear unexpectedly and after a while He would vanish (Luke 24:13-31, Luke 24:36-43, John 20:26-29). He would at times appear in such a way as to be unrecognizable and then He would allow Himself to be recognized (Luke 24:13-31, John 20:11-16, John 21:4-7). At times He would pass through walls and locked doors (John 20:19, 26). Our Lord’s manifestations after His Resurrection were such as to show forth His victory over death and His power over and freedom from the established laws of the natural world.

VERY REV. MESROB SEMERJIAN

“The Armenian Guardian” April 1961

THE YEAR 1965 FOR ARMENIANS

Relatively few nations and ethnic groups, whose roots reach into the deep past, have survived the ravages of time and history. It has been said that the continued existence of the Armenian people to this day is something of a miracle. Instead of disappearing or barely surviving the repeated attempts at their annihilation by powerful enemies, the people of this nation continue to demonstrate remarkable vigor and lively response to the excitement of this century.

What perpetuates life to these people in the face of death, and gives will to rise against all the forces of hell? Geography placed them at the crossroads of conquerors who brought new civilization along with terror and destruction. During the long centuries that preceded and that followed the advent of Christianity they were forced to live with mighty neighbors and conquerors and to adapt to many new waves that engulfed them for better or for worse. In the process they managed to achieve and retain a national consciousness and character and stood apart from neighboring nations.

With the beginnings of Christianity so near to their precious Mount Ararat, there emerged a wellspring that eventually became the mainstream for western progress. It was within these waters that the Armenian people chose baptism of faith, a faith that brought sharper differences with sun worshipping and other pagan neighbors; it also encouraged a stronger sense of national purpose and character, and a golden age of scholarship and new literature. These gave single-minded expression to the new faith. In an era when violence and self interest were the accepted way of life, the Church inspired her members with the moderation of the Golden Rule. In a region that assigned little value to human life there came new appreciation for the worth of individuals. In a period that nations counted only military victory or shameful defeat, the martyrdom of Vartan and of his comrades in arms at Avarair in 451 A.D., in defense of Christian faith,

stood an eternal memorial and tacit assent to the superior merits of spiritual triumph.

Avarair was neither the beginning nor the end. The fires of Mazdaism gave way to the scimitar of Islam, whose sword spread death and destruction to much of Europe and Africa. During the Crusades the European powers themselves learned how bloody the terror and persistence of Islam could be. And while they could withdraw into their own lands the Armenian people, whose land the Turks held tight, spilled their blood afresh each year and with each new effort to be freed from that yoke. But the most harrowing chapters of this long struggle to exist and to worship without restraint, came within the memory of those now living, in the massacres of the period that are identified with the year 1915, just fifty years ago.

The Political Thorns

While the Turkish authorities were directly responsible for these horrors, their barbarism would have been less destructive if the fierce economic and political competition among Christian powers had not been a factor in keeping the scene of these crimes free of each other's influence. The Christian nations of Europe were not unaware of the weakness and anachronism of the Ottoman Empire and of the cruelty to the minority groups. Such intervention as was attempted on behalf of the Armenians served only to focus the wrath of the government more strongly on the Armenians. The Turks knew only too well that while the European rulers had no love for the Turkish government, neither would these rulers permit one of their own nations to rule the Dardanelles. The climax came when the Turkish government decided to have recourse to genocide in order to put an end to the Armenian Question.

The Armistice of November 11, 1918 brought respite for most of the world, but the horrors did not cease for the Armenians. An independent Republic of Armenia was estab-

lished to permit Armenia, Turkey and others in that area to live side by side. But the neighboring countries attacked and took away land. The choice regions of the Mountains of Ararat fell before Turkish attack. Finally, the Soviet Union absorbed the remainder.

The coming of Communism brought added confusion. To the role of Western Europe in support of Turkey there was added United States support for the purpose of containing Communism. The need for such containment seemed to surpass all other considerations, bringing in even the alliance of the Turk for that purpose, despite its contradiction to every ideal of the people and policies of the United States. Fortunately there seems to be substantial lessening of the tension in recent years which may make a change feasible toward a more wholesome policy.

Although several billion dollars of U.S. tax money have been poured into Turkey to bolster her economy and progress, the situation there seems to remain the same. The dollars seem to go down the proverbial drain. In recent years the United States government may have come to realize the hopelessness of building up Turkey. There is still a risk, nevertheless, that a short-view dependence on Turkey may strengthen her hand against the interests of minorities, especially Christian minorities. There is risk that Turkey may be permitted to keep the territories she seized through attack on Armenia directly following signing of the treaties, including Mount Ararat and the valleys which are so fertile yet now largely desolate.

Across the borders of this deserted area lies Armenia, where hard work and native ability and persistence have worked wonders. Science, industry, education, agriculture have prospered against severe obstacles. As part of the Soviet Union, Armenia has enjoyed opportunity to build and grow, despite the Stalin purges and World War II. Seldom during her long history has Armenia been free of armed attack from unfriendly neighbors for so many years. As a Soviet Republic she enjoys neither independent government nor indepen-

dent ties with the outside world. But political independence is a privilege that she has not enjoyed for six centuries and her peace and welfare seem to be almost inseparably tied with the destiny of the Russian people.

Looking beyond the immediate tensions and fears that now strain relationships between the USSR and the West, it seems unavoidable that the welfare and true progress of the Russian people must be reckoned as important to the United States as is the progress of any other nation. Only with economic progress in Russia can the stability of world peace be assured, especially in the fact of greater threats from the East. The present Armenian republic must therefore continue to strengthen its own economy, develop its science and education, and contribute to the progress of the Russian people in the process.

What history may eventually record for the history of the land called Armenia, we cannot tell. What we can tell is that there is a present and pressing need for United Nations attention to the fact that the precious lands wrested by Turkey lie fallow and unavailable to the people whose land it had been for thousands of years. The problem requires the balancing of the virtues of short-range convenience against a solution of longer duration. The alternatives are between the continuation of a bankrupt policy which consists in supporting Turkey beyond her political and economic and geographic needs and capabilities, versus the satisfaction of the urgent land needs of a diligent minority as envisaged once by President Wilson. It is a matter of continuing to support an oppressor whose manners remain friendly only as long as United States funds continue to support her hopelessly backward economy, or of defending the rights of a minority eager to develop the land which was left behind to escape total genocide.

The Role of the Church

The role of the Church has changed from that of earlier centuries when the Church was father and mother to the people, and protector from physical oppression as well as

spiritual dangers. The Church exists and grows solely for spiritual purposes. A foreign visitor to Yerevan in Soviet Armenia, is likely to be taken first to Etchmiadzin, which has been holy city to Armenians since the beginning of the fourth century. Each Sunday the ancient Cathedral of Etchmiadzin resounds to the feet of peasants, of city dwellers and tourists who gather to worship. Each Sunday the ancient stones reecho, as they have done for so many centuries, the beautiful, melodic liturgy. This liturgy, warm and so uniquely the cry and worship of a responsive people, is usually sung by music students from Yerevan who give voice as if for the whole people.

And so Etchmiadzin stands today as it has since the turn of the fourth century, a strong witness to Christian faith where it is needed most. It is the heart and soul of this land where history, architecture, scholarship, music and ethics are inseparable from ancient places of worship which bear perpetual, if sometimes silent, witness to the faith and struggles of the past.

In contrast, it is quiet and barren in the ruins of ancient Ani, the once proud city of "one thousand and one" churches, just over the present Turkish border. Its ruins, of great architectural and archaeological interest, are not open to interested archaeologists. It is quiet and almost deserted in the ancient city of Van near the beautiful lake of Van, and in many other cities from which the Armenians fled in 1915 to escape the sword. Towering over all are the snowy peaks of Mount Ararat, itself a symbol of Armenia, yet now a part of Turkey as a result of her attack on the Armenia which President Wilson had helped to establish.

In the Diaspora, church buildings have risen in many cities, each new structure a reminder of the ancient architectural traditions. The worship of song continues to be as deeply stirring in the west as in the east, in the north as in the south. The blood of martyrs, the cry of anguish of a people for whom freedom is more precious than life itself, have given this Church a significance that transcends time and space and environment.

Scholarship and the Arts

The earlier cultures of Armenian history gave way before the Christian period. The 5th century and later centuries saw many books, translations and whole libraries come into being. But the fruits of scholarship suffered from tyranny as much as did the people themselves. Nevertheless, despite centuries of persecution, fire and deportation, there remain today rich collections of ancient illustrated manuscripts which compare favorably with the best of corresponding collections of all other ethnic groups and nations. Combined with the important role which geography gave to Armenians in the Middle East, it becomes necessary to take account of the influences of Armenian history, archaeology, architecture, philology, theology, and literature, in most studies of Eastern Europe.

It has not been easy to utilize these historical sources. The massacres and deportations of the 1915 period reduced the people to bare survival. But recent decades have seen a great uprising of scholarly interest in Armenia, and throughout the world. The ratio of Armenians who seek college study and professional careers is apparently the highest of any national or ethnic group. Even this surge of scholarship has not yet satisfied the need for Armenologists. The great universities of Europe and the United States are now displaying concern over this lack, and some have sought to establish endowed Chairs in Armenian Studies. Harvard University, Oxford University, now have Chairs, and efforts are being made to establish similar Chairs at other universities. It is time to establish programs that will lead to renaissance of Armenian arts and architecture, letters, history, philology, and theology, to meet the needs of Armenians and of non-Armenian specialists in these fields.

A Mission for Armenians

The sacrifices of 1915, like those of Avarair in 451 A.D. and of many other periods, represented victories of faith, but there could be little awareness of spiritual gain in the

midst of mass murder. Even now, as we look back from a more fortunate position, it is difficult to boast of victory. The events are still clouded because the Turkish threat has the support of Western powers: clouded because the beloved Mount Ararat even today stands captive within Turkish frontiers; clouded because the world faces new uncertainties, new political divisions, new restraints, new anti-religious forces.

But the Armenian sense of values and of purpose is not wholly dimmed. The part of Armenia that was freed from Turkish rule now flourishes with new science and industry. Those who were dispersed to the four corners of the world have achieved middle class economic status or better, and have gained honorable citizenship in their new homes wherever possible. As in Armenia, they have pursued higher education in the arts, science, industry and commerce, and have been a force for progress and stability within every nation that has given them home and opportunity to prove themselves.

The people who suffer deportation and dispersal lose some of the provincialism which is normally acquired in one's native land. Loyalty to some new country that offers citizenship, safety and opportunity becomes very important. The problems of international stability and peace take on new significance. So it is with the Armenian. He has had to develop an awareness of the world which strongly contrasts with the provincialism of those who have been more fortunate. He knows from personal experience the difficulty of bridging the gaps and of communicating confidence and understanding from one environment to another, from one civilization to another, from one political philosophy to another.

He and his dispersed brothers now speak the English language, Spanish, French, or any one of a hundred tongues. Yet when they meet it is more than likely that there will be a warm feeling of kinship between them which encompasses and unites their new homes, their new loyalties, their new awareness.

This last observation suggests a role for Armenians around the world, in a period of history when better understanding among peoples is the most important need facing

the world. At the moment the problem which is most pressing for resolution is that affecting the relationship of the Soviet block with the outside world. There can be no doubt that there must be peaceful coexistence of all the groups and nations of the world, since it is unthinkable that any large group can be eliminated without destroying civilization. There can be no doubt that the desire for international peace and friendship on the part of the people of the Soviet Union is no less sincere than is the desire of our own people.

Perhaps the Armenian people, who have achieved an important status within the Soviet Union, in the Middle East, in Europe and throughout the Western, Northern and Southern Hemispheres, can make some contribution to this need. They have proved themselves capable of building industry and commerce, of producing scientists and technologists as well as artists of international fame. They have contributed to the stability of governments. Theirs has also been the less obvious role of encouraging international communication and understanding through their own forced and normal travels. We believe this role will be of special values toward improving understanding between the East and the West, and toward strengthening the economy and progress of the Middle East. For while the Armenian is by temperament and energy more a part of the West than of the present Middle East, he has had to learn to communicate and to cooperate effectively with his neighbors in that region.

The Year 1965 in History

The year 1965 takes on significance not only for those who share the Armenian heritage, but for all Christendom, for Humanity, and for the United Nations as well. The year revives poignant and personal memories to those who lost father, mother, loved ones during those horrible days. Armenians everywhere have held special memorial services since the martyrdom of 451 A.D. at Avarair. The Cross has been an ever present experience to this land and its people

who have borne the brunt of the swords of both pagans and of Islam. But as the 50th anniversary of the most destructive chapter of their history, 1965 will be a year of special remembrance and respect.

Fortunately, death and devastation gave way to new life. As Easter Sunday follows the sadness of Good Friday, we turn quickly to the rebirth and growth of the remnants who have become a force for good and for progress in the world. The year 1965 is therefore also a year of thanksgiving for this rebirth.

But our feelings of thanksgiving are clouded by the continuing realization that the land of Armenia is still divided, and that the lands around the Mountain of Ararat are not open to Armenians or to Christian worship. It is therefore also a year of apprehension, of questioning and of wishful hope to very many Armenians to whom that land means life itself. The hope is that the nations of the world will at least be interested in finding a more equitable, just, and lasting solution to the territorial problems of Armenia.

Christian martyrdom and rebirth are meaningful only in the framework of an even higher purpose. There will have been purpose in their martyrdom if that terrible experience somehow helps to prevent a repetition of savagery.

The year 1965 is therefore also a year of dedication to the purposes and service of humanity, for Armenians everywhere. There must continue to be major contributions to the economy, industry, science, education, the arts and culture of every nation that becomes home to them. It can be contribution of a quality that reflects long history and travail, that strengthens the foundations for peace and for human progress throughout the world.

PROFESSOR V. L. PARSEGHIAN
"The Armenian Guardian" April 1965

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS On Genocide

Q. In what sense is the word “martyr” being applied to the more than one million Armenians who were killed or died in the Turkish atrocities of 1915?

A. The word “martyr” is being used for the victims of the Turkish atrocities of 1915 in the broad sense that they died because they were Armenians and Christians. But of course the technical and theological meaning of the word is much stricter: a Christian martyr is one who deliberately and voluntarily gives up his life for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ and out of pure love for Him: he is one who even though he could have saved his life by renouncing Christ and complying with the demand of his persecutors nevertheless deliberately and voluntarily chose to remain faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ and was consequently put to death. Among the more than a million Armenian victims of the Turkish atrocities there were many who were presented with the choice between on the one hand embracing Islam and saving their lives and on the other hand remaining faithful to Christ and dying. But such cases were not the majority. For the most part the Armenians were massacred or subjected to death-producing conditions in a program of mass genocide.

It is noticeable that in the recent encyclical of His Holiness our Catholicos Patriarch on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the atrocities we are instructed “to pray for the repose and illumination of the souls of our myriads of martyrs.” This in itself indicates that our “martyrs” of 1915 are not being considered as martyrs in the strict canonical sense, since we do not pray for canonized martyrs, rather we ask them to pray for us, since they are already perfected and illuminated. Nevertheless, as we have mentioned, there were many true martyrs among the myriads massacred in the 1915 atrocities (and undoubtedly also in the preceding atrocities of 1895 and 1909).

The greatest tribute to the memory of all those myriads would be to identify out of their number those who deliberately and voluntarily gave up their lives for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, out of pure love for Him, and to canonize them as saints so that we might hereafter celebrate their memory as saints and seek their intercession for us. It would be a splendid thing if this canonization of these true martyrs were done before the end of this year, the fiftieth anniversary of their martyrdom. In the event of such canonization, every year on an appropriate day following Pentecost (when saints begin to be celebrated in our calendar) we would celebrate the memory of these martyrs of 1915 (and of the preceding atrocities) invoking their intercession and on the same day we would commemorate the remaining victims of those atrocities (who were not actually martyred) by praying for the repose and illumination of their souls – much the same as we do on Saints Vartanantz Day when we celebrate and invoke the intercession of the 1036 martyrs of the fifth century struggle for religious liberty and, on the same day, we commemorate the remaining number of St. Vartan's 66,000 soldiers and in general all the faithful Armenian people of that time who were involved in the struggle by praying for the repose and illumination of their souls. (This, incidentally, is the proper meaning of the *hokehankisd* or requiem on Saints Vartanantz Day, which unfortunately is not brought out in our present church annual calendars.) The celebration of our New Martyrs and the accompanying commemoration of our massacred myriads might even be observed on Vartanantz Day itself, appropriately supplementing the calendar rubric of that day.

“The Armenian Guardian” January 1965

Q. Why did merciful and loving God allow one and a half million Armenian Christians to perish so horribly during the massacres and deportations of 1915? Or, more generally, since God is all-good why do so many good people suffer?

A. This question has been asked over and over again through the ages as a result of not sufficiently understanding, or being willing to understand, the true nature of the world and the method God has been using in dealing with it. The universe is not a finished product, God is still working on it, molding it as it were into a fully perfected universe, completely good and harmonious and beautiful. This perfection of the universe will be finally achieved and revealed at the Second Coming of Christ. We are yet in the intermediate period, more precisely we are in the last phase of the intermediate period wherein the molding and perfecting process is continuing and approaching its conclusion. This process takes the form of the interplay of good and evil or of positive and negative forces. It is of the very nature of the universe at this stage to exhibit this interplay of or action and reaction between good and evil forces. Something like the use by the goldsmith of blows with his hammer and jabs with his chisel and twists with his pliers on the gold in the molding and shaping of a beautiful article of jewelry. From the point of view, so to speak, of the particular portion of the sheet or lump of gold which is receiving the blows or jabs or twists at any particular time those blows and jabs and twists are bad, "they hurt", but from the point of view of the smith and of the image he has in his mind of the yet-to-be-realized finished product they serve a good purpose. This is of course simply an analogy and must not be pressed too far. But it does help to understand the function of evil in the world.

From our Christian faith we know that the evil forces in the world although permitted by God to operate are constantly under His control in some way or other and they must and do serve His purposes. Furthermore those who are being hurt by the evil in the world will not be harmed by it if they unite themselves to God through faith and love and make themselves instruments in His hands to "capture" and "harness" as it were the evil forces in the world and to turn them to serve God's good purposes. As Saint Paul said: "All things work together for good to them that love God" (Romans 8:28,

K. J. Version). If a Christian is suffering at the hands of unbelievers and is being put to death, by his courage and patience and unswerving faith in Christ he becomes an even stronger and better Christian and he also exerts such an influence on his tormenters and other non-believers as to induce many of them to turn to Christ, as has happened on many instances. Humanly speaking, it is indeed “too bad” that kind and loving Christians should have to suffer and die like this in the first place, but Christianly speaking it is only their share in their Divine Lord’s own Sufferings and Death for the salvation of the world. This is why Christian martyrs are so highly honored. They have confirmed and exemplified what Christ taught, namely, that the world can be saved from evil only by becoming existentially involved with evil so as to absorb its shock and thus to conquer it and thereby to make it serve God’s good purposes. Christ conquered suffering and dying voluntarily. And through His consequent Resurrection He made it possible for all who believe in Him to share in that conquest.

VERY REV. MESROB SEMERJIAN
“The Armenian Guardian” November 1967

THE MESSAGE OF ASCENSION

It is unfortunate that the Feast of the Ascension always falls on a weekday. But the fact that it took place forty days after Easter means that it inevitably is commemorated on a Thursday, this year, May 11.

The reason it is unfortunate, of course, is due to the fact that it is seldom remembered and celebrated by more than a small number of Christians.

The event was supreme importance to the first Disciples. Their despair at the Crucifixion had been turned into great joy at the Resurrection. And during the forty days following the Resurrection, Christ had appeared to them many times, the New Testament tells us, and explained to them many things which they had not understood.

Then the fortieth day came. And on this day, He left them for the last time. The Gospel speaks of this as a physical rising into the clouds.

But, in this, as in many other Church teachings, we are applying the language of time and space to what is beyond them. What the early Christians were trying to convey to us is the fact that our Lord went to be with His Father. Or, to express it in another way, our Lord returned from whence He had come.

On Ascension Day, we pray that, as He ascended, so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell.

Whether we think of heaven as “up” or not, we are praying that in this life and in the next, as well, we may have fellowship with our Lord and Savior.

Some of us may feel somewhat hesitant about this, when we think of how our lives are filled with sinful “thoughts, words and deeds”.

The Centurion must have felt this way when he sought Christ’s help in healing his only son. “Lord, I am not worthy”, he said, “that thou shouldst come under my roof, but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.” (Matt. 8:8)

Our Lord answered his prayer for help, and He will answer ours. He expressed this as His will, when He said: “I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.” (John 12:32)

We cannot lift ourselves up, but, by the grace and mercy of our Savior, He can extend to us His forgiveness. It is this which puts us into right relationship with Him.

“The Armenian Guardian” May 1961

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

On Ascension

Q. What is meant when we say in the creed that our Lord “ascended into heaven with the same body and sat at the right hand of the Father”?

A. When our Lord ascended up into heaven He did not go to simply take up abode in inter-stellar space. Heaven is not a region high up in the sky or above the sky. It is used symbolically to represent heaven, yet heaven itself is a spiritual reality which can be only partially and imperfectly manifested through out present natural universe and therefore transcends it. So what happened at the Ascension was that our Lord rose up, He vanished from sight and bodily transcended the created universe, that is, He raised Himself bodily above the conditions of time and space to which He had voluntarily subjected Himself for our salvation.

The “right hand” of the Father is to be understood not in a spatial sense, but as the position of coequal honor and glory with the Father.

Our Lord’s ascension and sitting at the right hand of the Father was not an accomplishment for Himself, for He, being God, was from all eternity inseparable from and coequal with the Father, but it was for our sake that He ascended and sat at the right hand of the Father bodily so that we also might be able in Him and through Him to rise up to heaven and be with God.

VERY REV. MESROB SEMERJIAN
“The Armenian Guardian” April 1961

PENTECOST THE BIRTHDAY OF THE CHURCH

In the second chapter of the Book of Acts we read that the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles on Pentecost. The event that took place on that day was considered by the early Church important enough to rank with Christmas and Easter. It is still, of course, a very important feast of the Church.

The coming of the Holy Spirit was the fulfillment of a promise made by our Lord. He had promised his disciples that they should be “baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

We shall ask ourselves two questions:

- a. What happens when the Holy Spirit comes?
- b. Who is the Holy Spirit?

The answer to the first question is given in the narrative written by St. Luke, referred to above. The disciples were gathered together in one room when suddenly they were made bold to go out and proclaim that Jesus was the Messiah, and that He had risen from the dead. This proclamation required immense courage for two reasons: first, because it was extremely difficult to make people believe that a man executed as a criminal by the proper authorities was the Messiah and that, furthermore He had risen from the dead. And yet it is simply astonishing to see how simply St. Peter presents such a difficult subject. He simply says that Jesus, crucified by his hearers, was the Messiah, emphasizing the fact that He had risen from the dead. “This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.” (Acts. 2:32).

At the beginning of his sermon, St. Peter uses a single “argument”. People had thought that the disciples were drunk to say such unusual things. How can we be drunk, St. Peter argues, since it is so early in the morning!

St. Peter quotes the prophet Joel and then David to drive home the point that the events that “you yourselves know” were foreordained, namely according to the plan of God.

With such a simple sermon, St. Peter achieves what was normally impossible. This is the work of the Holy Spirit.

The second reason why the apostles' Pentecostal proclamation required courage was because of the hostility of the masses. The apostles knew only too well that the authorities would not allow that the criminal whom they had crucified be presented as Messiah all over again, now that He was nearly forgotten except for a little group who clung to the hope of his return! Such a proclamation might very well cost the apostles their lives. They accepted the challenge. This, again, is the work of the Holy Spirit.

As to our second question: Who is the Holy Spirit, we have the answer in the Havadamk (Creed) and in our Pentecost hymns.

The Holy Spirit should be referred to as "He", not "it"; because He is God, the third Person of the Holy Trinity.

The work of the Holy Spirit is the work of God, but to Him are ascribed the works of sanctification. He makes us saints. A saint is one who has lived a life of Christian conviction with limitless courage.

The function of the Church is to produce saints. The Church can do this because the same Holy Spirit that descended on the Apostles is at work in her.

But men can (because they are free and they can serve the Devil if they so choose) interfere with the work of the Holy Spirit. We must see that this does not happen in our Church. We can worship God only if we are selfless instruments in His Hands. Only thus can our work for peace and universal brotherhood be effective and fruitful.

HAGOP NERSOYAN

"The Armenian Guardian" May 1961

THE CONVERSION OF ARMENIA

We have all seen bishops. When a bishop preaches in our church he holds a staff of a kind that clergymen of lower rank have no right to use. A bishop's staff, though sometimes made of precious metals, reminds us of the long sticks that shepherds use to guard their flocks. The meaning is that a bishop is to the faithful what a shepherd is to his flock. A man cannot become a bishop simply by wishing to become one and going to school. He must be ordained by another bishop who, in turn, has been ordained by still another before him. The very first bishops were thus ordained by the apostles themselves.

The apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew ordained the first bishops of Armenia. They had come to our ancient country and had told the people about the wonderful things that Jesus Christ had said and done in Palestine. They also informed them that He had died on the cross and risen from the dead. "He is God," they said, "and the whole world ought to obey and worship Him." At the time, however, not all people were ready to believe that what the apostles declared was true. Moreover, it was dangerous to believe in Jesus Christ for in Armenia, as elsewhere in the world, the rulers would not allow the people to hold religious beliefs contrary to their own.

Yet there were in Armenia many people discerning and courageous enough to follow the apostles rather than the pagan king. They were the first Armenian Christians. Because they were persecuted, the early Christians would hold their meetings under the leadership of their bishops who were ordained by the apostles. They celebrated the Divine Liturgy (or Patarag), presided over the meetings, and saw to it that the Christians lived in peace with each other as in a big family.

For nearly three hundred years the kings were against Christianity and false and frightful rumors circulated against it. Even then the church grew larger and larger. The center

of the Armenian Church was at Artaz where Saint Thaddeus had been martyred. The headquarters of a church is known as a see. This word actually means the chair on which the bishop sits when he is engaged in his official work. The see of Artaz was occupied by an unbroken succession of bishops. One of these bishops was Mehruzhan. We know about him from a letter that a Greek bishop, Dionysius, wrote – as the historian tells us – “to those who are in Armenia, whose bishop is Mehruzhan.”

The king of Armenia was, in those times, a powerful ruler. His name was Khosrov. The king of neighboring Persia, Artachir by name, did not like Khosrov. He had killed some relatives of Khosrov in order to become king and was afraid that Khosrov might some day take vengeance. But Artashir could not defeat Khosrov in battle. He therefore plotted to have Khosrov killed. He sent to Armenia one of his subjects, Anac, to carry out his evil plan. No one ever remembers Anac with sympathy, for he was a murderer and a hypocrite. He was of the same family as Khosrov. As he set foot in our land he lied to people and told them that he was running away from Artachir and that he was trying to find refuge in friendly Armenia.

King Khosrov the Great knew nothing of the plot. He received Anac with great honors and gave him a warm welcome at the palace. One way of showing his trust and friendship was to invite his guest – as he did one day – to go hunting with him. That night Anac made his foul plans. He had brought his wife and children with him in order to make Khosrov believe that he left Persia not to return. He told his wife to be ready to leave the next day.

When the devil wants to take a man into the worst parts of hell he whispers into his ear: “kill another man!” Artachir was an obnoxious tool in the hands of the devil. And Anac was a tool in the hands of the devil and of Artachir. In the thick of the forest he suddenly found himself alone with King Khosrov. “Now ... now ...” he said to himself; then, with his long spear, he wounded the king mortally.

When the king's guards returned, they found him dying. He could hardly breathe but had enough time to order the execution of Anac and of all his family. Anac was caught before he could cross the border and the order of the king was carried out. Two children of Anac escaped the execution. The smaller of these children was a one-year-old baby. He was to become Saint Gregory the Enlightener (or Sourb Grigor Loussavorich). His nurse, Sophia, cared for him. Anac, whose execution was by drowning, must have thought in his last moments of the many rewards that the king of Persia promised him. Artashir himself died within a year, without seeing the realization of any of his plans. But his death brought no relief to Armenia. Artashir's son, Shapur, intended to finish the work begun by his father. Nor were his ambitions limited to Armenia alone. He fought the Romans as well and succeeded in making of Valerian, the emperor, a prisoner of war. An Armenian nobleman had, in the meantime, become the ruler of Armenia. His name was Artavazd. He wrote to Shapur to tell him what he thought of Valerian's capture:

"I share in your glory," the ruler of Armenia said to the Persian monarch, "but, I am afraid, rather than carry a victory we have only poured more fuel on the flames of war ... All you did was to jail an old man, and you roused against you the peoples of the world; perhaps you roused them against us, too, because we sent you auxiliary troops; we, as your neighbors, are always troubled on account of your hostilities with the commonwealth of Rome,"

We do not know whether Shapur did or did not follow the advice of the Armenian ruler. What we do know is that Persian pressure kept increasing for a time in Armenia after Khosrov's murder. Shapur would have liked very much to have put an end to Khosrov's dynasty. To this Dynasty belonged Trdat who was nowhere to be found in the zones of Persian influence. The fact is that he, along with his sister Khosrovidoukht, had left the country. It is even possible that Artavazd was the very one who had arranged their escape.

The heir to the Armenian throne spent his entire youth in the great cities of the Roman Empire. He fought alongside Galerius, in the armies of Emperor Diocletian of Rome. Diocletian and he became good friends. He was preparing to return to Armenia to free his country from Persian rule. Gregory, Anac's son, was also preparing for a liberating mission, but they knew nothing of each other.

Gregory grew up in the city of Caesarea. There were many Christians in this city and many Christian teachers. As he grew up, Gregory learned from these teachers about Christianity. He was then baptized and became a very learned and devout Christian. He was also very courageous and intelligent.

Many years later Trdat, the son of King Khosrov, left Rome to occupy his father's throne in Armenia. On his way there he passed by Caesarea where he met Gregory. Since Gregory had become a learned man, Trdat proposed that he become his secretary. Gregory was glad to accept the offer and join the king. He was already married and had two sons: Werthaness and Aristakess.

There was a large crowd waiting for the king at a village in Armenia, called Eriza. Great preparations had been made to receive him. The people were particularly pleased to know that he was coming to drive the Persians out. At the place of merry-making there was a great statue of Anahit. This was a very important goddess worshipped in the land of Armenia in that time. They thought she was the goddess of the earth.

In the midst of the happy talk, laughter and shouts of joy, when most people were full of wine, Trdat invited all his guests to worship Anahit and to thank her for his own safe return home as a king. He himself worshipped Anahit first, and when Gregory's turn came, he wanted him to do likewise and offer a wreath of flowers to the goddess.

Everybody waited for Gregory to do so. Who could ignore the king's orders? But Gregory did not move. The king grew somewhat annoyed and repeated his order. Even then Gregory did not move. This was a very grave offense,

punishable by death. All the dignitaries were shocked. “Who does he think he is?” they asked each other. “Is he stronger than Trdat?” a lady whispered. Wine had stopped being poured. The silver bowls did not tinkle. There was a heavy silence over all. Gregory slowly rose to his feet and spoke solemnly: “I am a Christian and I do not worship figures made of gold, iron or wood. Although I am Your Majesty’s most humble servant, I owe my first loyalty to Jesus Christ who is my Lord and my God. I humbly beg your Majesty to excuse me, but I refuse to worship Anahit and to offer her a wreath.”

A murmur of astonishment and awe rose in the crowd. The king did not seem to know that Gregory was a Christian. He did not, at any rate, expect this disobedience from a secretary.

“Take him!” he roared in extreme anger and sudden hatred. “Take him and give him all the punishments that a Christian deserves!” These punishments were ghastly tortures. They included, for instance, running on ground covered with thorns and upright nails.

When the king learned from an old prince that Gregory was the son of Anac, his rage knew no bounds. He gave him the worst punishment. He sent him to the town of Artashat and there had him thrown into a deep pit (Khor Virap), in the damp darkness of which people became food to creeping animals.

But Gregory did not die. An unknown widow was moved to kindness and she fed him whenever she could. She was, perhaps, protected by the king’s sister. It was ordained at any rate that this son of a criminal be taken out of the pit by the king’s sister herself, that he might become one of the world’s most beloved church leaders.

HAGOP NERSOYAN

“A History of the Armenian Church”

THE CONVERSION OF ARMENIA

(THE STORY OF SAINT GREGORY THE ENLIGHTENER)

Introduction to Story

One of the best known stories that our historians tell us about King Trdat has to do with the Gayanian and Rhipsimian nuns. Even if this tragic tale is not historically accurate, it reveals certain convictions of our historians. They believed, in the first place, that King Trdat attained a supreme morality as a result of his conversion. They were further convinced that Christianity is a healing religion, and that a person who has seen the light of Christianity can no longer live without it. It was therefore understandable that a woman like Rhipsime should prefer death to the favors of the king and that her religious superior, Gayane, should urge her to resist the royal advances. The story as told by our historians is as follows:

A wave of persecutions by the Roman Emperor, Diocletian, brought a group of nuns to Armenia. The superior of the group was Gayane, and the most beautiful among them was Rhipsime. Her beauty was known throughout the Roman Empire and she could not very well remain hidden among the vines near Val'arshapat where the nuns were established themselves and eked out a living through work with beads. The news of her presence on Armenian territory reached the king who immediately summoned her to his palace. He tried everything in his power to win her favors. At one time he devoted to that purpose seven consecutive hours. Rhipsime fought back all his advances and, at an opportune moment, tore herself away from the hands of the king and, thereby, from all the comfort and honors that an easy assent held in store for her. She joined her sisters, but soldiers caught her before long. With the other women of the group she was subjected to degrading tortures that ended of course in death. As a consequence of the execution of these innocent women, Trdat lost his very humanity. He no longer had even the

appearance of a man. He acted like a boar, and began to look like one.

The truth of this story is not so much in its details as in its dramatic impact. It is also true in the sense that it is typical of the conditions under which the Christians lived during periods of persecution in Armenia and elsewhere. One of the most important documents which give us an accurate picture of these conditions is a letter by Pliny the Younger (a Latin author and statesman) written to Trajan, the Emperor of Rome from 98 to 117 A.D. When he wrote this letter Pliny was the governor of Bithynia, a province of the Roman Empire. This is what he says to the Emperor:

“Sire, it is my custom to refer to you all matters about which I am doubtful: for who is better able to direct my hesitation or instruct my ignorance? I have never been present at trials of Christians and therefore I do not know what are the usual penalties or investigations, and what limits are observed. I have hesitated a great deal on the question of whether there should be any distinction of ages; whether the weak should have the same treatment as the more robust, whether those who recant should be pardoned, or whether a man who has even been a Christian should gain nothing by ceasing to be such; whether the mere name of Christian, apart from crime, is punishable, or only crime coupled with the name.

“Meanwhile in the case of those reported to me as Christians, I have followed this procedure: I ask them whether they are Christians. If they admit it, I repeat the question a second and third time, with threats of punishment. If they persist in their confession, I order them to be led to execution ... Then the usual result followed; the very fact of my dealing with the question spread the crime and more varieties occurred ... All who denied that they were or ever had been Christians should, I thought, be discharged, for they invoked the gods at my prompting and worshipped, with incense and wine, your image which I ordered to be brought for that purpose, along with the images of the gods; and especially

because they reviled Christ, a thing which, it is said, a Christian can never be compelled to do ...”

Trajan’s reply to this letter is equally interesting. With typical Roman respect for the law he writes: “...No hard and fast rule, no formula for universal application can be laid down. The Christians are not to be sought out; if they are informed against, and the charge is proved, they are to be punished, with this reservation – that if anyone denies that he is a Christian, and actually proves it, that is, by worshipping our gods, however suspect he may have been in the past, shall obtain pardon by penitence. Anonymous pamphlets should carry no weight in any charge whatsoever. It is a thing of the worst example, and out of keeping with this age.”

The systematic, mass persecution of the Christians began after Trajan, under the Emperor Decius in the middle of the third century and under Diocletian from whom the Gayanians are said to have fled. For a considerable time Trdat followed the example of Diocletian. Yet the people of Armenia were ready for Christianity. The existing religions did not satisfy them in any profound way; the common people lived constantly in a situation of war; there were unbearable social injustices. There was also, and this was peculiar to Armenia, a cultural tension between the Persian and the Roman ways of life. Men longed for standards and moral ideals that would assure a better and purer living. They saw life being frittered away all around them and sought answers to the most pressing issues of their existence. They yearned for redemption, and the brotherhood of all men under one God satisfied their desire for human equality. In the divine-human person of the one Lord they saw the reconciliation of the spiritual, cultural, social and psychological conflicts in which they lived.

Toward the end of the third century there were a great many Christians in Armenia. If the percentage of the Christians there was half as high as in Asia Minor, then we may safely assume that about a fourth of the population of the land had become Christians. Christianity needed simply

official approval in order to emerge to the surface with great vigor. Yet paganism had the advantage of having an organized priesthood on its side, and this consideration helps us to appraise the energy with which Saint Gregory carried out his mission.

The reputed lycanthropy of Trdat was symbolic of the condition of his country. The luminous face of Saint Gregory broke through fifteen years of abject imprisonment, bringing salvation to the sick and ailing.

After the official adoption of Christianity in Armenia the country experienced a renewed vigor as if in keeping with the restoration of the king's health. Trdat built fortresses and monuments at least one of which was inscribed "in Hellenic writing". He contributed generously to the building of religious edifices, and to make it possible for them to function properly, he divided each shire under his rule to seven sections two of which were given to the church. In each of the fifteen provinces of Armenia a sizable plot of land was given to Gregory the Enlightener personally.

Two friends were sitting in the shade of a tree in a vineyard near the city of Val'arshapat in ancient Armenia. One of them was a foreigner. He was a businessman who had come to Armenia from far-away western lands. Both men were very sad and silent. Presently a young man riding a beautiful horse appeared on the field beyond the trees. His puffy red trousers were showing underneath his long silken coat. His rings and other jewelry that he wore on his breast glittered in the sun. As he rode back and forth trying to teach tricks to his horse, the foreigner saw that one of his shoes was red, the other black.

"Why is he wearing shoes of different colors?" inquired the foreigner.

"Well," said his friend, "only the king can wear two red shoes. It's a silly custom," he went on, "they wear those things and ride horses all day long. At night they go to banquets and that's their life. We have to do all the work and

pay all sorts of taxes besides. And now that the cat is sick all the mice are out playing and feasting.”

“What cat?” asked the foreigner.

“Why, the king!” said his Armenian friend.

The king of Armenia had indeed been stricken with an unusual sickness. It happened one day as he was getting ready to go hunting. Suddenly he began to shake all over; then he let out a big shout the like of which had never been heard before and fell out of his chariot. Presently he stood on his feet and ran and disappeared into the woods. At the time the king was not a young man, but he was still very strong. In fact, the strength of King Trdat was known in many lands. People remembered the day when he had carried the armor of his wounded horse on top of his own and had swum across the river to join his friends. On another occasion he had climbed up the wall of an enemy castle all alone and had thrown down bales of fodder for the horses of his own army. He had also hurled down the big guards of the castle along with their wild dogs. King Trdat was the one who had wrestled with and defeated the savage chief of the Goths when no one in the whole Roman army would dare to approach that powerful barbarian. And now that the king had disappeared into the woods no one would dare go after him.

At the end of the day the king came back by himself. He looked strange, but when he saw his people, he quieted down and did not say anything. He would utter queer sounds and would not eat.

Like the man who was sitting under the tree with the foreigner, people all over the land were very much worried. They did not know what to do. They loved their strong king who was at the same time very learned. They boiled all the herbs that would cure strange sicknesses and gave him the juices to drink. They went on pilgrimages to the temples and prayed to all the gods they knew. It was all very useless. Many noblemen laughed at the people who went to the temples. The noblemen and many educated people did not

believe in the gods at all. They knew that what they called the gods were no more than beautiful statues.

There was one person in Armenia who was concerned about the king most of all. Princess Khosrovidoukht had dreams about her brother. As time went by, she became more and more certain that the lone prisoner in the deep pit of the dungeon at Artachat had the power to cure the king. She believed that he had a power that one could receive only from Jesus Christ. Saint Gregory had been in the pit for years. But the princess knew that he was alive. One day she made up her mind and sent for him.

Saint Gregory's coming out of the pit was such an important day for Armenia that the Armenian Church still celebrates the event every year.

One of his first concerns was to heal the king. Then he gathered together the relics of those who had been martyred in Armenia for the sake of Christ. Two of these martyrs were Gayane and Rhipsime, of noble families.

One night St. Gregory was thinking of Gayane, Rhipsime, Mariane and other martyrs who had laid down their lives for the Lord Christ. He was meditating on the rewards that they must have received in heaven, when suddenly, as the historian tells us, he saw a vision. In his vision the heavens opened and a man with a radiant face came down and called him by his name: "Gregory!" he said. The saint looked up and saw something like a stream of light pouring upon the earth from above. St. Gregory recognized in the person who came down from heaven the Only-Begotten ("Miadzin", that is, Jesus Christ). Jesus held in his hand a golden knocker. With this object He tapped the ground. At that spot there appeared to the saint a huge column of fire, with clouds on top of the column, and a cross of light on top of the clouds. Three other similar columns also appeared to Saint Gregory, but these were smaller in size. He knew, as he woke from the vision that at the place of the tallest column was to stand the mother cathedral of the Armenian Church.

It was to be called "Etchmiadzin," meaning "the Only-Begotten descended."

At the places of the three other columns Saint Gregory proceeded to build churches dedicated to Saint Gayane, Saint Rhipsime and Saint Mariane. This last church is known as the church of Saint Shol'acath. Even the king worked to build these churches. He now put his great strength to the service of Jesus Christ. One day he disappeared for seven days. He was looking for stones from Mount Ararat to be used in the construction of these churches. He carried them himself. The queen and the ladies of Armenia, along with Princess Khosrovidoukht, carried things and helped build. When more money was needed, they gave their jewelry. The men and women of the nobility and the ordinary people had never known, together and themselves, such happiness in their lives before.

Saint Gregory preached, gave counsel to the confused, help to the needy, and courage to the weak. The church of Armenia was growing every day, and it soon became necessary to have a catholicos as the official head of the church. A meeting was held at the city of Val'arshapat. The king himself, as well as the queen, Princess Khosrovidoukht and the notables of the land, attended. This was the first meeting in the history of the Armenian Church for the election of a catholicos. No one could think of casting a vote for anyone other than Saint Gregory. He was escorted to Caesarea in a gold-gilt carriage drawn by white mules and there he was ordained and consecrated a bishop.

Upon his return to Armenia Saint Gregory stopped by the river Aradzani. There he baptized nearly one hundred thousand people. Some of the people who were baptized were priests of the old religion. One of these, Albianus, even became a bishop.

King Trdat went to meet the returning head of the Armenian Church at Bagravand, at the foot of Mount Nepat, on the shores of the river Euphrates. Then they returned to Bagavan, the capital city of the province. Saint Gregory ordered one month of prayers and abstinence as a preparation for the baptism. At the end of this month a great multitude

gathered near the river. An event of unusual importance was about to take place. There was no Christian king at the time in the whole world. A king was going to be baptized. King Trdat walking into the water, joined his hands and bowed his head. Saint Gregory poured water on his head and baptized him with great solemnity. Many of the Christians who had been hiding in caves and who had shuddered at the mere mention of his name only a few years earlier, raised their tearful eyes to heaven and gave thanks to God with a loud voice. Now it was the turn of the queen; after the queen the princess, then the princes, then the noblemen, then the people. They were all baptized clad in white. Saint Gregory celebrated the Divine Liturgy. They all received Holy Communion. The festivities lasted seven days. They were days of joy, days of thanksgiving. Armenia was now a Christian state and there was no other Christian state in the whole world. The year was 303 A.D.

Saint Gregory worked twenty more years. In these twenty years he changed the face of Armenia. Instead of the old temples there were churches; instead of mogbeds there were priests and bishops; instead of paganism young people learned the Christian religion. He established church laws and decided how the religious services should be held. Instead of the old gods and goddesses, Jesus Christ was worshipped openly in the far corners of the land. Saint Gregory who spread the light of Christ to Armenia is known as Saint Gregory the Enlightener or Sourb Grigor Loussavorich. He was 82 years old when he died. He had spent the last years of his life praying and meditating in the mountains alone.

King Trdat died seven years later. At one time he had St. Gregory thrown into jail. But then they became companions and worked for the same cause. Today, we cannot think of the one without his friendship for the other.

HAGOP NERSOYAN

“A HISTORY OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH”

(STORY V: pp. 33-40)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

On Holy Etchmiadzin

Q. “I notice that in our calendar there are two feasts of Etchmiadzin, one falling on the second Sunday after Pentecost and the other on the Saturday immediately preceding the Feast of the Assumption of the Holy Virgin. Are these two feasts simply duplication of the same feast or is there a real difference between them, and if so, what is the difference?”

A. A careful study of our Donatzooytz (Book of Feasts) reveals that of the two feasts only the second one is primarily and specifically the feast of Etchmiadzin. It is called the “Feast of Holy Shoghagat that is of Holy Etchmiadzin.”

The first of the two feasts, which is called the “Feast of the Catholic Church of Holy Etchmiadzin” is primarily the feast of the establishment in Armenia of the catholic and apostolic Church of Jesus Christ. This establishment of the catholic and apostolic church in Armenia came about of course in the first century through the labors of the apostles St. Thaddeus and St. Bartholomew and not at the beginning of the fourth century through St. Gregory the Illuminator by who Holy Etchmiadzin was established. Therefore Etchmiadzin is included in this feast as a detail and not as the primary object of the feast. It is significant that the introit (jhamamood) of this feast is not the Etchmiadzin introit (Der mer yev Purguich ...) but the introit of the Catholic Church (Zkhaghaghotyoon shnorhya ...).

The primary object then of this feast is to celebrate the establishment of the catholic (universal) Church in Armenia, that is the establishment of the Armenian Church as a part of the catholic Church. The secondary object of the feast is Holy Etchmiadzin, the center of universal jurisdiction in the Armenian Church and therefore recognized as the catholic or universal church of the Armenian Church.

In the light of these facts the name of this feast should be slightly modified to read: “Feast of the Catholic Church and of Holy Etchmiadzin.”

Q. How is the Dove symbolizing the Holy Spirit to be portrayed?

A. The Dove is to be portrayed in a downward flight position (flying from heaven to earth), the head of the Dove pointed down, the tail up and the wings spread out at right angles such that the Dove appears actually in the shape of a cross, with rays emanating from between the angles formed by the wings and the body.

VERY REV. MESROB SEMERJIAN
“The Armenian Guardian” June 1958

‘AND WE BELIEVE ONLY IN ONE ...HOLY CHURCH’

The Church is that religious organization which aims to continue, till the fullness of time, the mission for which Christ came into the world: to accomplish from generation to generation the purpose which Christ set before the Church, that is, to sanctify its members and to lead them towards eternal life and salvation.

Only a church which is orthodox can perform this task. A church that has veered from the path of its mission, or whose character has become corrupted, can not realize this divine purpose. The Church has special signs which indicate its true character and confirm its orthodoxy. The signs and characteristics of the Church are stated in our Credo: “We believe only in one universal and Apostolic Holy Church”. These signs of the Church are closely interrelated; one presupposes the other; one is as important as the other. For the purpose of the present discourse, however, we shall concern ourselves with only two of them, the Holiness and Unity of the Church.

HOLY ARE ONLY THEY WHO SERVE THE DIVINE PURPOSE

Holiness has two meanings. Holy means, first, pure, immaculate, spotless. Holy is that article or person that does not contain elements contrary to its nature to mar its beauty and to interfere with its efficient functioning. We wipe our eyes when foreign objects interfere with their function of providing a clear vision.

Holiness has another connotation. Holy is the object or person who has become separated from his kind and is dedicated to a Godly purpose. Holy is the building which is set aside or is built specifically for divine worship. Holy is the cup which is selected from among other cups, or is made specifically for the purpose of being used during Holy Com-

munion. And finally holy is he who withdraws from the world and men in order to dedicate himself wholly to the service of God.

The Church is holy with those two meanings.

When we speak of the holiness of the Church, we do not at all ignore the fact that all the members of the Church are not holy. It is true that many unholy acts are performed in the holy name of the Church, as many unjust acts take place in a just state. But those sinful works do not affect the holiness of the Church so long as holiness remains the ideal of the Church, so long as sanctifying graces are active in it, so long as the Church denounces openly such unholy and offensive acts, so long as the Church strives to lead the sinners away from their evil ways into the path of righteousness. Nonetheless, while the Church summons its members towards the ideal of holiness, it is also cognizant of the fact that offenses are certain to occur even within it. It is impossible for offenses not to occur, "but woe unto that man by whom the son of man is betrayed." ... "If thy brother shall trespass against thee ... tell it unto the Church." It follows that there are apt to be offenders within the Church, who are still our brothers until they become perverse as to be as "heathens", that is, they are classed with those outside the Church. "We admit," said St. Augustine, "that there are righteous and unrighteous people in the Church; the righteous are the wheat, unrighteous the chaff." The existence of the very mystery of penitence presupposes the existence of sinners in the Church, for it is a mystery performed for sinners.

In the New Testament the parables of wheat and tares or casting the net into the sea are indicative of this fact. "For many are called, but few are chosen."

We made these quotations simply in order to say that the holiness of the Church and the fact that some of its members are transgressors do not contradict each other, just as the thieves, bribe-takers and murderers which swarm among the citizens of a country are not a reflection on the righteousness

of the state, so long as it considers them guilty and carries out punishment.

CHURCH YOKED TO WORLDLY AIMS FORFEITS HOLINESS

The Church is, first, holy as a pure and immaculate organization, for holy is its founder Jesus Christ. Holy is its purpose, which is to sanctify its members. Holy are the means which it employs to attain its purpose, that is to say, the Divine Mysteries and the Sacraments. Holy is the Church because God's Holy Spirit dwells there. This is why in the early days the members of the Church were designated as "saints." "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household." Our Sharagans are full of praise of the holiness of the Church. "Rejoice Holy Church." "An altar of Holiness stands the Holy Church."

The Church is holy also according to the second meaning. It has been separated from all the societies of the world to serve an exalted divine purpose. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Ep. 1:4). "But we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." (1 Pet. 2:9). Consequently, when the Church becomes identified with other worldly societies and becomes one of them, it ceases to be holy. And when it thus forfeits one of its basic characteristics, it ceases to be the Church of God.

The Church will be acting against its own holiness if it serves purposes other than that which has been consigned to it, even though they are deemed to be "innocent" and "useful". As we have said on another occasion, the essential character of an organization is verified by its objective, and it is the faithful execution of that objective which prevents deviation and perversions. The Church is for the purpose of leading men to their eternal destiny, that is to salvation.

Whenever a high official of the Church or persons entrusted with the helm of the Church, cause it to digress from the eternal purpose and make it serve other purposes, they rob that Church of its characteristic of holiness, they distort the true character of the Church in their control, and transform them into “unholy”, mundane organizations.

THE CHURCH IS AUTOCEPHALIC

The Church has callings which are kingly, prophetic, and priestly. Kingly, because it is an autonomous, sovereign, and independent organization, which summons its members from the servitude and constraint of sin and degeneration into holiness and spiritual freedom. The Church is the Kingdom of God. Its prophetic calling consists of preaching the truth freely and unbribed, to scourge and condemn injustices of all kinds and the prostitution of religion, that is, forsaking the true God, to worship false gods, mammon, the self and pleasure. “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but ... my people doth not consider. A sinful nation.”

The Church’s priestly calling consists of serving as mediator between God, to sanctify its members by the administration of the Mysteries and divine worship. Those who, forgetful of these sacred callings of the Church, hitch it to political, factional, and personal ambition, commit the sacrilegious sin of giving away to foreign masters as a maid-servant the immaculate bride of Christ, and if they fail to repent and to remedy their deadly sin, will find forgiveness neither in this world nor in the world to come.

If the Church serves its real purpose, it is indefectible, that is, it will continue till the end of the world. The gates of hell shall not prevail. For that very reason, that is, because of its indefectible character, whatever is related to the Church will be perpetuated with it, be that language, literature, culture, even “race”. If, however, it abandons its eternal purpose, pursues ephemeral and transitory manifestations, will lose

even that which it possesses. "For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away that which he hath."

Certainly the Church has, along with its principal purpose, related tasks, such as social service and the cultivation of the intellect. But it does all this not as a goal, but as a means towards its primary purpose. These are the bi-products of the Church's religious and ethical activities which benefit the believer as well as the non-believer. If the Church is transformed into an exclusively philanthropic and cultural organization, it becomes as divested of its characteristic of holiness as it would have been if it were changed into a political or factional association.

The Church will have acted against its characteristic of holiness if it becomes a tool for any outside authority and receives its direction from it. The Church must be absolutely free from any pressure or sponsorship from the right or the left. The Church is a sovereign and self-sufficient organization under God's protection and dominion. The Church is taken out of the boundaries of God's dominion whenever certain responsible persons in church circles place it under the protection and authority of this or that organization vested in a medley of colors. This is forcing the Church into a state of servitude and robbing it of the freedom "wherewith Christ hath made us free." All those who commit the sacrilege of enslaving the Church are responsible, first, before God.

There may be organizations whose direction may coincide for a while with that of the Church. Such appearances, however, are but temporary; consequently, the Church should not ally with them, for unquestionably there will come a point where the direction of the worldly organization must veer from the course adopted by the Church. Consequently, the Church must retain its independence strictly adhering to the Royal Road prepared for it by its divine founder. It must never veer to the right or left: must never become identified with this or that faction or this or that course. By pursuing its specific goals, the Church is enabled to counter the powers

of evil wherever they may be. Aside from the principle of independent Sees and the canonical position of the hierarchy of the Armenian Church, there still stands the other principle which is imperative for the Oneness of the Church: The Church which is One, must have one head.

A two-headed organic unity is unknown in the natural state of things, and is even more so in a Church that is One. The reason for the existence of numerous churches in the Christian world today is the fact that there are many heads. If the Armenian Church is One, it must have one and universal head, otherwise the Unity of the Church is destroyed.

We describe as heresy acts which are against the unity of the doctrine and creed of church, and we call acts against the administrative of the Church schism. They are both equally dangerous to the Church and therefore are to be condemned.

The Armenian Church is One and can only be One. In order to be a part of that Unity, it is essential not only to have an identical faith and ritual, but to be in the same administrative and hierarchical system of the Armenian Church. The supreme spiritual authority and the head of the hierarchy of the Armenian Church is the Catholicos of All Armenians.

The very title, “Catholicos of All Armenians,” is the expression of an important and basic principle. That title springs from the very character of the Church. The Unity of the Church of the Armenians is embodied in the person of the “Catholicos of All Armenians.” It is only lip service “to recognize the authority of Holy Etchmiadzin” without recognizing in its totality the limits of its established jurisdiction.

“Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falleth.” (Matt. 12:25) Our national-political history is but a sad witness to this historic and Evangelical truth. The higher authorities and true sons of the Armenian Church must awaken to this great peril which confronts the Mother Church, and must not permit the foregoing verdict of history to become a reality also in our Church history.

THE ARMENIAN CHURCH IS ONE IN CREED AND ORGANIZATION

The other important characteristic of the Church is Unity. The Armenian Church is one not only by faith, rites and Holy Mysteries, but by its canonic laws and hierarchical order. Its canonic laws have been established by councils representing the highest ecclesiastical authority of the Armenian Church. If it becomes necessary to introduce changes or to establish new rules, that must be done by the highest bodies of the Church. To establish laws of expediency contrary to the fundamental laws accepted by the whole Church which have been consecrated by centuries of use, means the destruction of the Unity of the Church.

Our Church is one also by its administrative and hierarchical system. In accordance with its particular system of administration, there exist in the Armenian Church several independent districts. The existence of these independent Sees does not at all corrupt the unity of the Armenian Church, for, first of all, they are not entirely separate units, but the indivisible parts of a great whole. Third, they are related to the Central See of the Armenian Church by definite canonical rules. The authority of each independent See extends only within the limits of the area defined for them. To come out of its own area to extend its authority over areas under the jurisdiction of other Sees, is decidedly a counter-canonical act and destroys the Oneness of the Armenian Church of its very foundation. "Do unto others, as you would that they do unto you." (Luke 6:31). One could expect at least the consideration of this golden commandment of the Gospel by men in whom there still lives an elementary common sense, even if the Christian spirit and an awareness of canonical discipline is dead among them. None of the independent Sees should have attempted an intrusion into the area placed under the jurisdiction of a sister See. If such changes are necessary, they must be effected through mutual understanding and by deliberative

bodies representing the highest authority of the Church, and not unilaterally.

ARBISHOP TIRAN NERSOYAN

Translated from “SION”

by DEACON HOVHANNES KASPARIAN

“The Armenian Church” April 1958

THE ARMENIAN CHURCH PROFESSION OF FAITH

There is a Church that does not claim to ascribe validity to dogmas. Nor does she condemn as heretics or schismatics those who would not conform to the teaching of her doctrines.

In the early centuries the profession of faith in each church was expressed by an official formula: the SYMBOL or CREED. The Latin Catholic Church retains still in her liturgy a short creed known by the name of the Apostle's Creed, but it is wanting in all the characteristics of an official declaration in the matter of faith. The Council and the popes were in the habit of constantly remodeling the creed, with the sole object of suiting it to their dogmas, which they produced one after another according to their requirements. The Vatican Council, in 1870 also added new expressions to it. But it was the Council of Trent especially which most of all enlarged the limits of those theological and scholastic opinions, as well as those rigid dogmas, which it had laid down and which are forced on believers under pain of anathema; and all this has been done with the sole purpose of enhancing the papal authority. So that the Roman Catholic, hemmed in on all sides, is able at present, neither to discover a loophole whereby he can bring to the light his own personal opinions, nor a clear field for enlarging the horizon of his studies.

Does Not Condemn Those Who Disagree

Now there can be no occasion for anything of this nature within the pale of the Armenian Church. Of a truth, she too has her national synods, and she does not fail to lay down her decision on doctrinal matters. Nevertheless, she never sets forward the claim to ascribe validity to dogmas, nor does she condemn as heretics or schismatics those who would not conform to the teaching of her doctrines. All the doctrinal points which fix the line of demarcation between

the Armenian and other churches, and which are in no way designed to trespass on the prerogatives of these latter, are so many instances which corroborate our statements.

The Armenian Church only recognizes councils to be truly ecumenical, and having authority to pronounce dogmatic definitions, which embrace all branches of Christianity assembled in accordance with a revealed principle. Such unanimity will never present itself again after the split of the fifth century, and we would add that it cannot recur so long as the disputes which divide the churches endure.

The Athanasian formula

The creed adopted by the Armenian Church for its offices, is the Athanasian formula which had its beginning during the Council of Nicaea. It contains almost exclusively the dogma of the Incarnation, which she preserves with neither modification nor addition. However, this same Church possesses a second creed, which was drawn up later and is represented in the ritual. It is recited by the clergy on the occasion of their ordination; but it differs from the former only in amplifying the formulas, the chief of which relates to the natures of Jesus Christ.

Differs from that of Eutyches

The formula should be deemed sufficient for the purpose of rebutting the imputation of Eutychanism, once maliciously or thoughtlessly made against the Armenian Church. The interpretation in question consists in the expression 'One nature united' (in Armenian: Miavorial mi bnouthiun). Eutyches treats of a blend and a confusion of the two natures, which result in the unity of Christ; whereas the unity of nature, or the monophysitism, which is accepted by the Armenian Church, is identical with the Ephesian formula, which is that of St. Cyril: One nature of the Word Incarnate. If, in the mystery of Incarnation, the divinity and the humanity – that is to say, the two natures – had preserved their duality, that cir-

cumstances would have been fatal to the virtue in the passion of Jesus Christ, who in the character of one indivisible Person, God and Man; and affecting the Redemption, the self-same reason suffices. Were it not so, we would find ourselves landed in the doctrine of Nestorius. Of all kinds of union which, in our opinion could be compared with the supernatural union of Christ, that of the union of mind and body seems to supply us with the best explanation. For one cannot deny the unity of human nature, in spite of the distinction between the mind and body. Such, therefore, is the monophysitism, of the Council of Ephesus, which the Armenian Church upholds, and which is altogether different from that of Eutyches. The name of the latter is officially and solemnly anathematized by the Church under the same head as those of Arius, of Macedon, and of Nestorius. No one can, therefore, accuse this Church of Eutychianism without incurring the reproach of ignorance and of dishonesty.

Perfect Accord with Orthodox Church
on Most Dogmatic Questions

With regard to the differences which divide the Armenians and the Greek Orthodox Churches, these apply solely to the rejection by the former of the Council of Chalcedon, and in the non-recognition of the succeeding Councils. On all other dogmatic questions, the two churches are in perfect accord. For it behooves us to declare that if the Councils in question have not been recognized by the Armenian Church, nevertheless the points which were determined by them have never been rejected ipso facto. For instance, the condemnation of the Three-Chapters, pronounced by the fifth Council, which was but a return to the decrees of Ephesus, may be looked upon as favorable to the doctrine of the Armenian Church. The question of nonthelitism (one will in Christ's two natures) which was handled at the sixth Council was a repetition of the Chalcedonian policy. The worship of images, on the other hand, dealt with the second Council of

Nicaea, aimed only at the point which bore rather a ceremonial than doctrinal aspect. Without being altogether banished from the Armenian Church, this worship has ever been confined to the narrowest limits. Statues are debarred, as they are reminders of ancient idolatry. With regard to pictures and bas-reliefs, they are blessed and anointed with oil, in order to differentiate them from ordinary works of art; and it is only after their consecration that they are placed over altars. Contrary to the practice of other communions, which decorate the interior of their houses with icons, the Armenian Churches possess only holy images.

As to the expression of dogmas, this Church holds strictly to the ancient formulae; she therefore no more admits the addition of the Filioque, the particular judgment, the pains of purgatory, the immediate beatific vision, than she does transubstantiation, the indulgence, and the papal theory. All these innovations could only have been accepted by the Latin world by an improper interpretation of the practice of the primitive Church.

It is with simpleness of purpose and a minimum of encumbrance that the Armenian Church has steered her course in the matter of dogmas. The lofty principle expressed by the learned divine of the Western Church, but of which that Church has been neglectful, has been and ever remains the watchword of our Church. The expression *Unitas in necessariis* (United in essentials) has been brought by her to a point of most stringent necessity; that of *Libertas in dubiis* (Liberty in doubtful matters) she has applied in the broadcast of senses; and is only on the basis indicated by common sense that it will be possible to our thinking, of ensuring the Universal Church of *Cheritas in omnibus* (Charity in all things).

PATRIARCH MALACHIA ORMANIAN

“THE ARMENIAN CHURCH”

Diocese of the Armenian Church of America

February 1962

WHY MUST I GO TO CHURCH?

1. To get help, inspiration and strength for each day. Life is a continual struggle between light and darkness, between Christ and evil. Christ is conquering and His ideals are being established throughout the world. Progress depends on each individual striving for Christian ideals.

2. To worship the Lord, for the whole Bible inculcates worshipping Him. All Churches worship in many different ways, but they worship.

3. To be an example. Actions speak louder than words. The church is the home of liberty, progress, education, health, ideals and salvation. I must show where I stand.

4. To give the Lord my richest offering – a grateful heart for all His blessings. I surrender to Him.

5. To learn about God, for soon I must meet Him in the Judgment. I want to learn His will and plan of salvation. In the world I hear about this life and the sins of humanity but in Church I hear about practical Christian living and my heavenly home.

6. I am a thinking, reasoning being. The Church brings me in contact with the Lord Jesus, producing happiness and contentment ending in immortal glory.

7. I will make no excuses. Excuses are heard: “I am better than the people who go to church” and “I do not learn anything”. Too often indifference, pleasure and worldly minds are the real reasons. I will be loyal to Christ and I must go to Church.

“The Armenian Guardian” January 1961 (p.18)

MANNERS IN THE CHURCH

Introduction

Good manners occupy a very prominent place in every civilized society. Various phases of life have their forms of etiquette. Business and governments have their specific formalities. We can not think of traffic without laws. There is no decent social party without some rules. Therefore, a code of behavior is an inevitable part of life, in any situation where human beings are involve.

The practice of religion has been in the past, is now, and shall always remain, as one of the most important aspects of human life. As such, religious life has its own particular forms of behavior in the houses of worship.

It is a well-established fact that religion is the mother of almost all fine arts. It is however a less known fact that the origin of almost all common ethical manners is found in religion too. From religion comes the basic principle of common etiquette: that kindness and good behavior are more admirable than strength and beauty. Honesty and humility are fundamental in any genuine etiquette; and these are religious virtues.

“Manners make the man”. The saying is as true in church life as it is in common life. Your behavior in the church is a direct expression of your religious faith. Sometimes church manners seem unimportant to those who do not know their deeper meaning. Their roots, however, go deep into certain sound religious principles.

The main difference between common etiquette and church manners lies in this fact: In common etiquette we are concerned with our relations to our fellow men alone. In church behavior we are, in addition, concerned with our relations with the Almighty God, who is present, in a special sense, in our consecrated church edifices. “My house shall be a house of prayer”, says the Lord. This is the biblical principle and foundation for our general behavior in the church of God.

Good manners in the church are not the business of the clergy alone; they are the concern of all who attend church services.

Basic rules

It is commonly taken for granted that average civilized people should know the general rules of etiquette. It is expected that all good church people should learn and practice at least the principle rules which will govern their behavior in the church. These basic rules are:

1. An attitude of reverence and respect forms the foundation of our church manners. This should be taught to the children at the earliest possible age; not only by verbal instructions but by our own respectful example.

2. The church is not a common social place. Therefore, such things as merry nods, broad smiles, hearty greetings, and conversations, which form the heart and soul of other social gatherings, are out of place in the church. However, puritan and strict formalism on the other hand, are alien to the genuine spirit of our church which must have more the atmosphere of a spiritual family where we have come to meet our common Heavenly Father; to express to Him our love, thanks, and gratitude; and to ask Him to attend to our spiritual needs.

3. Concentration on the ceremony should form our main concern in the church. Therefore, heads turn to look for friends, and other similar distractive motions are bad manners in church. At joyful occasions, such as weddings, christenings, consecration of churches, etc., a little more leniency is tolerated. If one happens to catch a friend's eye on such occasions, certainly there is no reason not to show recognition with a short and subdued smile. Even on such happy occasions, however, our personal and social relationship should be subordinated to the religious ceremony. Greetings in the church should always be restrained.

Attendance at Church Service

1. If we take our church membership seriously, we must go to church every Sunday without fail. This is the first and foremost religious duty of every Christian. Not only our spiritual leaders, but even our own common sense tells us that it is not a great hardship to take an hour and half out of 168 hour of the whole week and dedicate it to the adoration of our Creator and Heavenly Father. Even if you do not understand the language of your church service, to take part in public worship and try to do what others are doing has its merits before God. Besides, the more frequently you attend your church, the more easily you understand its services.

2. Acquire the habit of arriving at church at the beginning of the service. The Divine Liturgy or the Holy Mass (Soorp Badarak), which is the main service in our churches on Sundays, starts, as a rule, at 10:30 and ordinarily ends before 12:15 pm. However, if for one reason or another, you have been delayed, there is no need to feel embarrassed when you are late for the service. It is better for you and your church to arrive a bit late than not attend at all.

3. Early comers should take the first pews and leave the back ones to late comers. By so doing, you safeguard yourself against needless distractions; and save embarrassment for those inevitable late comers. Consideration and thoughtfulness for others is as important in the church as it is in common life.

Entering

1. Your entrance into the church must be reverent and gentle. One of the devotional practices of the Armenian Church, as of all Eastern Churches, is the beautiful custom of burning candles in front of the holy pictures. It symbolizes Christ, “The Light of the World”. It also symbolizes our prayers which must be as pure as light. Candles are also votive offerings to God. Therefore, as you enter the church you

obtain a candle from the table at the door in lieu of a gift of money. You light the candle before the holy picture or on the altar set for this purpose. While making the sign of the cross, you say a short prayer for you and for your dear ones; and take your place. Candles can also be given to a member of the Trustees, who will light them for you at the appropriate place.

2. While entering, if you find that the choir is singing “Sanctus” (Holy, Holy...), or the priest is saying the Words of Institution (“Take, eat, this is my body ...”), which form the core of the Divine Liturgy; you should stay in porch and enter the church when it is over.

3. When you take your place you bow down your head slightly. You make the sign of the cross; and inaudibly say “The Lord’s Prayer”. You are now ready to participate in the service.

Participation

1. You must always keep in mind that you are not a spectator but a participant in the church service. Therefore, during the whole service concentrate on what is being said or sung by the priest, the deacon, and the choir. Our concern shall be to enter into the spirit of the devotional atmosphere of the church. If you do not understand the language of the service, there are handy Liturgy books containing both the original Armenian text and its translation into English.

2. If you are familiar with the tunes of the hymns sung by the choir, do not hesitate to join in singing. Always sing in a low voice and follow the choir. What the choir is singing is supposed to be the part of the people.

3. Do not sing, however, with the officiating priest and the person serving as deacon at the altar. The prayers of the priest are said on your behalf or for you. What the altar servers sing are mostly biddings and instructions for the proper behavior and attitude of the congregation in the church.

Standing and Sitting

Sitting and standing at the proper time seems to be one of the most trying problems in any Armenian Church service. We hope the following suggestions will ease our concern on this matter.

1. It must be known that most of the time people stand during the Divine Liturgy; it is the same for all Eastern Churches. Standing at any ceremony, civil or religious, is always an expression of respect. That is why in the good old days, when people had more genuine and abundant reverence for sacred ceremonies, people used to stand through the whole duration of the Divine Liturgy. It is practically the same to this day in some parts of the old world. In Jerusalem, for instance, there are no pews or seats in the churches.

2. You may sit during the Divine Liturgy:

- a. When the curtain of the altar is drawn in the beginning of the service.

- b. When scripture lessons from the Old Testament or Epistles are being read by one of the choir members from the chancel. (However, you always stand when the deacon or the priest reads from the Gospel).

- c. During that part of Liturgy which is called “Commemorations” intoned by the deacons and to which the choir repeatedly answers, “Hishia Der yev Vohormia” (Remember, O Lord, and have mercy).

Kneeling

Most unfortunately since kneeling is not being practiced in most of the Armenian Churches, people think that there is no kneeling during Armenian Church services. There is, however, kneeling in our church, although not as frequent as it is in the Roman Catholic Church. Kneeling is a higher expression of reverence than standing. It is an act of humility before the Divine Majesty. Humility is the greatest of all virtues. Without humility we can not receive God’s special graces.

1. You kneel during the Divine Liturgy:
 - a. When the Chalice is being carried around the altar, and when the celebrant is blessing the congregation with the chalice.
 - b. During that part of the Liturgy which is called ELEVATION. It comes towards the latter part of the service when the priest elevates the Chalice in the sight of the whole congregation saying: “Eesurpootune Surpotz” (Unto holiness to the Holy).
 - c. When “Der Vohormiia” (Lord, have mercy) is being sung.
2. Keep in mind that the sitting never takes the place of kneeling in the church. On the contrary, one has exactly the opposite meaning as the other. To kneel, as mentioned, means humiliating ourselves before the majesty and holiness of God. Sitting has always the meaning of taking it easy. It is most disheartening to see the congregation sitting easily at the most sacred and solemn parts of the Divine Liturgy, when they were supposed to kneel.
3. If, because of lack of practice, or lack of facilities at the church, you can not kneel at the above-mentioned proper places, the next best thing to do is to stand.

Bowing

Bowing, as a sign of profound respect and adoration, is most frequently practiced in the Armenian Church. It is almost invariably performed with every making of the sign of the cross and kneeling.

1. At the Divine Liturgy the direction to bow down is always given by the deacon with the words “Astoodzo yer-kir-bahkesstzook” (let us bow down to God). On other occasions, it is given by the priest while reading the prayers with the same words. At these biddings everyone in the church, the priest, the servers, the choir and the congregation alike, should bow the head as well as the body at the waist.

2. You always bow and cross yourself while walking past the altars.

3. While passing in front of the Bishop or the Arch-nort in his chair, you make a slight inclination of the head, without however, making the sign of the cross.

How to make the sign of the cross?

a. Join together your thumb, index and middle fingers at the tips.

b. Fold back the ring and little fingers upon the palm at ease.

c. Reach the forehead and touch it with the tips of three joined fingers saying: "In the name of the Father";

d. Then touch the middle of the chest saying: "and of the Son";

e. The touch the left and then the right sides near the shoulder saying: "and of the Holy Spirit";

f. The open your hand and put it on your heart, saying: "Amen".

Making the Sign of the Cross

Making the sign of the cross, too, is very frequent in the Armenian Church, as it is in all the Eastern Churches. The holy sign of the cross, as a reminder to the life-giving suffering and sacrifice of the Lord, has been from the earliest times a sacred object of veneration. At all times a special power is attributed to the use of this holy sign of cross. It is the sacred symbol of Christ and the Holy emblem of the Christian religion as a whole. An early Father of the Church, Tertullian, writing in the second century says: "In all our travels and movements, in all our coming in and going out, at the table, in lighting our candles, in lying down, in our employments, we mark our foreheads with the sign of the cross." Another Church Father of the fourth century adds: "Let us then not be ashamed to confess the Crucified. Let the cross be our seal made with boldness by our fingers on our forehead". It was used as a strong weapon against the spirits

of darkness. It took its place in the rituals of the church for blessing and consecration.

Crossing oneself with three fingers signifies blessing oneself in the name of the Holy Trinity. It means also professing our faith as followers of the One Who is crucified. It is, in the meantime, an expression of readiness to bear one's cross as a good soldier of Christ.

You make the sign of cross when entering the church and during the Divine Liturgy mainly.

1. After each bowing down.

2. When doxology (Park Hor), that is to say: "Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit" is being said or sung.

3. When the sacred name of our Lord is being solemnly referred to.

4. At the beginning of the reading of the Gospel.

5. When peace or blessing is being given by the priest with the words: "Peace unto all", (Kahahootune Amenenezoon).

6. When the deacon or the priest swings the censer towards your direction.

7. When the most sacred and the central words of the Liturgy are being said : "Take, eat, This is my body ..." and "Drink ye all, This is my blood..."

8. When kissing the Gospel and leaving the church.

Joining Hands Together

This is the common and traditional position of hands at any prayer as we see it in pictures, especially of praying children. It symbolizes the unity of our faith, singleness of heart, and upward elevation of the soul. During the Divine Liturgy only once do we perform the joining of hands and that is during the singing or reciting of the Creed, "Havadamk" (We believe in one God ...).

Two other occasions when we join our hands in any service are: (a) When singing the Angelic Hymn, "Glory to

God on High” (Park ee Partsoons). (b) When the Gospel book is elevated at the end of various services).

On these occasions every one attending the service should have his hands joined in front of his chest, palms touching each other with four fingers united and directed upwards and the thumbs crossed right over the left.

Salutation or “Kiss of Peace”

Another trying practice in the Armenian Church, for those who do not know the meaning and manner, is “The Salutation”. However, it must be known from the outset that this is the most meaningful ceremony which the congregation performs in the church. It is one of the oldest and most beautiful customs of primitive Christianity the Armenian Church still preserves.

The kissing on the cheeks was an accepted form of salutation in the early days, as it still is in the Middle and Near East among close friends. The Apostle Paul bids the faithful “To salute one another with a holy kiss (Rom. 16:16, 1 Cor. 16:20, 2 Cor. 13:12). Personal disputes and ecclesiastical disagreements were settled and reconciliations were established by a “holy kiss”. Therefore, this “Greeting” or the “Kiss of Peace” is a sign of reconciliation and a symbol of brotherly fellowship of the whole congregation, and a seal of unity of the church in love of God and one another. This being the meaning, let us now see how it is performed.

The deacon, after intoning the bidding: “Greet ye one another with holy kiss”, himself kisses the Altar and the hands of the celebrant priest. He comes down from the Altar and approaching one of those standing nearest, or to the priest if there is one, gives the Salutation.

How you take it? If it is a priest who “gives” you the “Greeting”, you take it simply by kissing his hand. If a layman is “giving” it to you, you receive it in this manner: You put your right hand on your heart. Then you reach your head first over the right and then over the left shoulder of the

person who is giving it to you, saying the proper words mentioned below. Then, in your turn, you turn to the fellow next to you, your hand still in the same position, reaching the shoulders of your neighbor, you give the “Greeting” to him in the same way. Then the person who has “taken the Salutation” turns around and passes it on to the next person. This is done until everybody in the church has “taken the Salutation”. While giving the Salutation you say “Christ is revealed amongst us”. The person who receives it answers: “Blessed is the revelation of Christ”. By this symbolic act the whole congregation is bound first with its own mystical Head, Christ, and then with one another in one sacred bond of love.

Not to take or give the Salutation, or to perform it in a careless way, is bad manner in the Church.

Leaving

Your departure from the Church should be as reverent and as orderly as your entrance. In the Armenian Church, as in the Roman or other Eastern Churches, it is almost impossible for the clergyman to come out right after the service to greet those coming out of church, as do the Protestant ministers. It takes quite a long time for our clergy to take off the church vestments. Therefore, people go to the clergyman to greet him and receive his personal greeting and blessing.

1. When the service is over the officiating clergy holds the Gospel Book or a cross. The people approach him one by one in a single line. They kiss the Gospel as they pass and receiving the personal blessings of the priest, leave the church.

2. If the church has the three canonical aisles, it is always proper for the people to come in line to the priest through the middle aisle and leave by the side aisles. If there is only one aisle in the church, then the common traffic law prevails – to follow ones right hand side direction while approaching the priest and going out.

3. It is not proper to stop and talk to the priest while kissing the Gospel Book. If you have something special to say to your priest, you stay aside and wait until everybody has kissed the Gospel Book and the talk to your clergyman.

4. Down the aisle, while leaving the church if you meet friends, you can throw a glance of recognition and a short smile but there should be no unrestrained gaiety and certainly no talking aloud in the church. You start your happy greetings and hearty conversations always outside the edifice of church.

Taking “Mas”

At the end of the Divine Liturgy the “Mas” or holy bread is distributed among the congregation. “Mas” is an Armenian word and has nothing to do with the English word (Holy) “Mass”. Our “Mas” means “share” or “portion”. When you take your “Mas” you kiss it and eat it. It is good custom to take some home to those members of the family who were though desirous to come to church but were unable to do so. Taking “Mas” does not mean Communion. It is the survival of a fellowship meal called “Agape”, in Greek, which early Christians used to have as part of the Holy Eucharist. It is only a sign of Christian charity and spiritual kinship.

Introduction, BOOKLET No. 5

Published by

The Diocese of the Armenian Church of California, 1955

AN ORDINATION

On January 25, 1961, I attended a Service of Ordination to the Priesthood in St. John's Memorial Chapel of the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Besides the brevity and simplicity of the Service, it was interesting to note that the preaching of the sermon took place at the beginning, as instructed by a rubric of the Book of Common Prayer which reads: "... there shall be a sermon, or Exhortation, declaring the Duty and Office of such as come to be admitted priests; how necessary that Order is in the Church of Christ, and also, how the people ought to esteem them in their office".

The sermon was preached by the Rev. Dr. E. V. N. Goetchius, Assistant Professor of New Testament at the Episcopal Theological School and Lecturer of Hellenistic Greek at the School and at the Harvard Divinity School. Not only was the subject of the sermon most appropriate, but also and especially, the treatment and the implications of the text ("We are ambassadors for Christ" – II Corinthians 5:20) were so apt that everyone present felt the sermon was addressed not only to the ordinand, or even to priests and bishops, but also to every individual lay member of the Church. In fact, all modern ambassadors of state – those who provide and make meaningful the sermon's analogy – ought to heed this exhortation also.

How I wish this sermon could have been heard or could be read by the clergy and lay members of my own Church! By my request, the Rev. Dr. Goetchius kindly submitted the text of his sermon for publication.

The Candidate, the Rev. Clifford Waller, was presented to the ordaining Bishop, the Rt. Rev. D.J. Campbell, by the Dean of the Episcopal Theological School, the Very Rev. J.B. Coburn.

The Service of Ordination began at 5 p.m., the ordaining Bishop celebrated the Eucharist and, besides the newly ordained, the members of his family received Holy Com-

munion. An impressive moment was the “silence kept for a space” just before the Veni, Creator Spiritus, in order for the congregation “secretly in their Prayers, to make their humble supplications to God”. An interesting point to note was that, during the Laying On of Hands, which is the most important moment in the Ordination and whereby, symbolically, the Office of the Priesthood is commissioned, all the priests present in the sanctuary, together with the Bishop, laid their hands upon the head of the ordinand. I was referred to 1 Timothy 4:14 as an ancient authority for the participation of presbyters, along with the Bishop, in the Laying on of Hands.

VERY REV. TORKOM MANOOGIAN

AMBASSADORS FOR CHIRST

My text is written in the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, in the fifth chapter, at the twentieth verse: “We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.”

According to the first rubric which stands at the head of the service we are just now beginning, the purpose of this sermon is to declare “the Duty and Office of such as come to be admitted Priests; how necessary that Order is in the Church of Christ, and also, how the People ought to esteem them in their Office.”

In fulfilling this purpose it would be possible to proceed in a number of ways. In explaining the Duty of Priests I might begin by examining the various duties which Priests are generally expected to assume and to perform. It is generally understood that it is the duty of a Priest – if he is a Parish Priest – to administer his parish and manage its affairs; if he is not a parish priest, a priest is still expected to be in charge of whatever administrative details are involved in the supervision of his cure. So a priest presides at parish meetings, meetings of the Vestry, and frequently even at meetings of committees. He also usually presides at festive occasions, like banquets and picnics, acting as toastmaster at the former and organizer of fun and games at the latter. He keeps a watchful eye on all parish organizations: he scoutmasters the scouts, helps the ladies’ sewing circle keep its thread untangled, and sees to it that the Sir Gal hands keep searching for the Holy Grail – or whatever it is that they do.

In addition to these administrative duties, the priest is usually understood to have the duty of visiting the sick, and, if he has time left, also the healthy. He is expected to perform this duty efficiently even though he is often left to discover for himself just who the sick are, and even though the healthy sometimes pretend to be not at home when he calls. Naturally, it is also understood to be the duty of a priest to be

in his office whenever someone needs counseling and comforting.

It is also generally understood that it is the duty of a priest to take a leading role in community affairs of an uplifting sort; naturally, however, he is duty-bound not to inject religion into politics.

It is, at least one day a week, the duty of a priest to be a minister of God's Word and Sacrament. This duty is widely recognized, but little understood. So far as being a minister of God's Word is concerned, however, this duty clearly involves the further duty of the priest to be a persuasive speaker and to be an expert in theological matters; the priest has, of course, also the duty of maintaining his position as theological expert, so that he must set aside time each day for reading and study.

Finally, since the priest is a leader in "spiritual" matters – whatever they are – it is his duty to attend diligently to his own "spiritual" life. And so, it is his duty to set aside time each day for devotional reading, for meditation, and for prayer.

All these, and doubtless more could be added, are the duties of a priest, and, taken all together, no doubt they comprise what the Book of Common Prayer calls the Duty of a Priest *par excellence*. And yet, however much such a catalog of "duties" may make it plain how, and how much – the people ought to esteem the priest in his Office, nevertheless, such a catalog does nothing to show exactly what the Office of a Priest may be, to which all these manifold and various duties may pertain. For the Office of a Priest is not the same as that of a businessman, or lawyer, or banker, or administrator of any sort, nor is it the same as that of a psychiatrist or psychoanalyst; indeed, I will go so far as to say that the Office of a Priest is not only that of a minister of God's Word and Sacraments, though it is certainly, and in some way no doubt primarily, this.

*

But to understand the Duty and Office of a Priest, and to understand how the People really should esteem him – not merely as an extraordinary Jack-of-All-Trades – to understand this we must see, behind all the manifold and various duties which the priest is expected to assume and perform, the true Office of a Priest and its One Paramount Duty which unites all his duties and makes of his seemingly-fragmented life a Single and Uniquely-Directed Whole.

*

The nature of the Priest's Office is not to be understood from examining the manifold duties the priest performs in our modern society, but a consideration of one of these duties, the only one which is peculiarly the priest's, will point us the way to an understanding. This is the Priest's Duty to be a faithful minister of Word and Sacraments. This is, so to speak, the classical duty of the priest; it has always been the priest's duty, and has always pertained to his Office. In the performance of this duty the priest acts as Priest indeed; as the representative of God to God's People, as the minister of God's Word; as the representative of God's People before God's altar, as he presents their offerings – and once more as God's representative to God's People, administering the holy food which God provides for their spiritual life.

This, the classical duty of a priest, cannot remain a merely ceremonial duty scheduled for performance on Sundays and Holy Days. It must be fulfilled in every other duty the priest performs. The Duty and Office of a Priest may therefore be explained simply and straightforwardly as the Duty and Office of a faithful minister of God. This would be sufficient if we had not lost, not only our understanding of all what the word "Priest" implies (and I am not by any means referring to its etymology, which is largely beside the point), but also our understanding of what the word "minister" implies.

I should like to attempt to revive this understanding in your minds today, by moving away from titles, such as priest and minister, which have been specialized and somewhat fossilized in the history of the Church, and to consider instead a title which was never taken over by the Church but which remains richly suggestive of the nature of the Duty and Office of Priests, whether that Office is held by one who has been specially chosen and ordained to the Church's official ministry, or whether that Office is that of the Priesthood of all believers. Indeed, I believe that a consideration of the title I have in mind will throw light on the differences, between the Church's official ministry and what we now hear so much of as the "ministry of the laity".

*

The title I am referring to is, of course, that which St. Paul applied to all ministers of Christ in the passage I have chosen as my text today: "We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us."

Any one who reads the newspapers or listens to the radio or television knows what an ambassador is and how important his work is. When the United States government sends an ambassador to a foreign country, it is that ambassador's job to represent the policies of the United States government to that foreign country as well as he can. A man who is an American ambassador is not supposed to give his own point of view on any question, but only to present the American government's point of view. But it goes without saying that an American ambassador can present his government's point of view most persuasively and most effectively if he himself believes in that point of view. It is possible for an actor to portray a part which he does not care for, but much easier for him if he likes and enjoys the part.

In addition, a man will be a better ambassador for his country if he believes in his country's policies and aims. It is true further that the kind of person a man is will also affect

his effectiveness as an ambassador. If an ambassador is the kind of person who is well-liked and respected by the people of a foreign nation, it will be easier for him to do his job well; for the people of a foreign country will be more likely to give a respectful hearing to the policies and aims of the United States if they are represented by a man whom they like and respect. Thus, although the ambassador does not speak for himself, he cannot separate himself from his message.

It is important for every American to understand this, for in a very real way every American who travels in a foreign country is an ambassador for the United States, and so is every American who meets and talks with foreigners traveling in our own country. When an official ambassador travels abroad, everything he says and everything he does is taken as representing what all Americans think and do. Therefore, obviously, a good ambassador is very careful to speak and act in ways which will earn him the respect and good-will of the people of the country in which he serves, whenever it is possible for him to do so. In exactly the same way, all Americans traveling abroad should act and speak in such a way that they will not be the cause of ill-will between our country and the country in which they travel. This should be plain, it seems to me, but there are a great many Americans who disregard this rule, which is not merely a rule of diplomacy but also a rule of simple good manners.

The picture of the American tourist, camera in hand, himself in a loud sport shirt and his wife in shorts or slacks which seem somehow to succeed in encirclement but not in containment, is a commonplace; but it is unfortunately a true picture. I have seen them myself, wandering into churches even while services were in progress, talking noisily and snapping pictures to perpetrate on their friends upon their return to what they regard as the only genuine civilization. Many American tourists, committing similar and far worse atrocities, have engendered an amount of ill-will against the United States which is difficult, if not impossible, to dispel.

If an official ambassador acted in a similar way, he would be fired at once and called home in disgrace.

On the other hand, I am glad to say that there are many Americans who take the trouble to find out what the customs of a foreign country are, and to respect those customs. Needless to say, such Americans are respected and liked, and are indeed real ambassadors of good will.

The bearing of all this on St. Paul's words should be quite plain. An ambassador for Christ has duties and responsibilities which are in every way parallel to those of an American ambassador in a foreign land. An ambassador for Christ must preach Christ's message, but he will do that best – indeed he can only do it – if he makes that message his own. The Church's official ministers: Bishops, Priests and Deacons, are the official ambassadors of Christ; they are specially charged with the duty of preaching the Gospel of Christ to all the world. The official ministers are charged with this duty especially, but it is not their duty alone; it is the duty of all Christians. All of you, good Christian people, are ambassadors for Christ; all of you are called to preach the Gospel in word and deed. You may never have to stand in a pulpit, but you will undoubtedly be called to preach the Gospel in some way. As Christians we are aliens in a far country, "strangers and sojourners", as the Bible puts it, for on every side we meet with men and women who are not Christians, whose lives have not been touched by Christ. You are an ambassador to them, and you preach the Gospel to them every day that you live among them. Are you a faithful ambassador for Christ? When your non-Christian friends and neighbors look at you, do they think, "I would like to be like him; I want to be a Christian?", or do they think, "I certainly don't want to be like that; thank goodness I'm not a Christian!"?

I hope I do not have, in this place, to say that the Gospel of Christ means a great deal more than good manners, or kindness, or charitableness, or being a jolly good fellow. It is much more than these, and yet it has happened many times

that for lack of one of these, some poor sinner has had a chance to hear the Gospel snatched away.

I had the good fortune a few years ago to be an assistant minister in a great Church, where the Rector was a great, loyal, and effective ambassador for Christ. One Sunday as I was standing near one of the doors of the Church, a few minutes before the service began, a woman I had never seen before came in at the next aisle, and with some hesitation went into a pew, sat down, then knelt down and prayed. A little bit later, another woman, whom I knew quite well, a member of the Church, came in, entered the same pew, tapped the first woman on the shoulder and said, in a raspy whisper loud enough for me to hear: "I'm sorry, but this is my pew; you'll have to move".

The first woman did move; she got up and left the Church altogether, and as far as I know she never came back. When I reached the door she was out of sight. She had come to hear a great official ambassador for Christ, but she never got to hear him, because one of the unofficial ambassadors failed to do her job. She had the chance to do an act of Christian charity; the least she should have done would have been to act with what we call "common courtesy", which is not ever Christian. If an ambassador of the United States did a comparable thing, he would be condemned as a traitor.

There are worse acts of treason, to be sure, that an ambassador can commit. The most treasonable act that an ambassador of the United States can commit, I imagine, is to abandon the interests of the United States and to embrace the policies and aims of an enemy nation, while still pretending to represent the policies and aims of the United States. It is possible, I am sorry to say, for a Christian ambassador also to commit such a despicable act of treason. A Christian preacher may find it very easy to leave off preaching the Gospel and to preach instead some message more pleasing to his hearers, a soothing message of self-satisfied complacency, a comfortable religion in which one may gain a crown without first having to bear a cross. The preacher who preaches such

a religion may become very popular, but he has ceased to be an ambassador for Christ, for he is no longer preaching his Master's message, but only his own.

*

All Christian people are called to be ambassadors for Christ; God wills to make his appeal through each one of us. The honor of being an ambassador for Christ is very great, equally great is the responsibility. This responsibility, this Duty of being faithful to this high calling, rests upon all Christians alike, but most heavily does it rest upon those whom Christ has chosen, through his Church and from his Church, to be his official ministers. In whatsoever measure an ambassador is faithful to his trust, he is deserving of the esteem of those who he serves.

*

And now, my Brother beloved in Christ, you are about to enter the official ministry of the Church of God, to become an official ambassador for Christ. I have tried to set forth the nature of your task, and to warn you against the temptations which may beset you. It is my earnest prayer that God will open to you a wide door for effective work in the service of the Gospel; and it is my fullest confidence that when you are driven to explain, "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel," it will not be because you have yielded to the temptation to preach unworthily of your calling, but because the fire of Christ's Gospel burns within your heart and soul and mind as it did in St. Paul's, with a flame that will not be quenched or contained, but must burst forth to melt frozen hearts and lighten the way for blinded eyes.

Many of the ambassadors of our country today have as a part of their duty the administration and distribution of vast sums of money and vast stores of food which our nation has given to the poorer nations of the world. It is not an easy task, and in some places it is charged that the gifts of the

United States never reach the poor and hungry for whom they are intended, but serve only to line the pockets of the wealthy few. You, my brother, will soon be in a like situation; you will be responsible for the administration and distribution of the greatest of all treasures, and of what food which is the very bread of life. I do not believe that I need further emphasize the perils which are implied by this parallel.

*

You are an ambassador for Christ. As an ambassador you are always under the protection of the King whose representative you are. The God who makes its appeal through you will defend you and strengthen you; whatever difficulties may beset you, his grace will be sufficient for you. To his keeping I commit you. May he equip you with all good things that you may do his will and work in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

REV. DR. E.V.N. GOETCHIUS

ORDINATION SERVICE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

ON SATURDAY

In the Armenian Church the ordination always takes place on a Sunday, during the Divine Liturgy; but the evening before, Saturday evening, the ceremony of calling the ordinand to the holy priesthood is performed. As the evening prayers come to an end, two deacons or priests take the kneeling ordinand by the arms and lead him to the Altar near which the Bishop is sitting on his throne.

The Khartavilac, the Presenter, after he has taken permission from the Bishop to speak, declares that the Church is requesting him, the Bishop, to ordain deacon (giving his name) a priest. Then follow prayers, exhortations and interrogations. The Bishop asks, “Has the ordinand the necessary education for the ministry? Has he kept himself pure since childhood? Is he worthy to receive the holy office of priesthood? Has he come with his own free will?” etc. The Presenter gives the answers to these questions.

Then the Bishop, directing his questions to the ordinand, says, “Do you undertake to observe the Divine office discreetly, and not to interchange the things of God with temporal things? Do you undertake to execute the precepts of the Prophets, the Apostles, and the Church Fathers? Do you believe and accept the Orthodox faith of the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation of Christ, our God? And do you denounce all the heretics?” Then the Bishop exhorts him to follow and be a disciple of the Orthodox Church Fathers. After which the ordinand makes his profession of faith by reciting the Orthodox Creed.

ON SUNDAY

The celebrant of the Sunday morning Liturgy is the Bishop. Just before lections, the ordinand is again led to the

Altar and presented to the Bishop. He is once more interrogated. Then the ordinand, facing congregation, raises his hands as a sign of his renouncing the world, while the deacons sing the hymn, "The divine and Heavenly Grace, which always provides for the service of the Apostolic Church, calls (giving the name of the ordinand) from diaconate to priesthood ..."

The choir then joins in with the declaration that "He is worthy." This is repeated thrice.

Then the ordinand turns to the Altar and faces the Bishop, who lays his right hand, with the left over it, on his head and reads the ordination prayer, "I lay my hand on this and ye pray that he may be worthy to keep the order of priesthood undefiled before the Holy Altar." Another prayer follows, asking God to keep the ordinand steadfast in the office to which he has been called.

Then the Bishop, taking the stole from the ordinand's shoulders, arranges it around his neck saying, "Accept the yoke of our Lord Jesus Christ, for His yoke is sweet and His burden is light."

Then they proceed with the Liturgy. When the gifts are brought to the Celebrant, and before the Kiss of Peace, the ordinand again kneels in front of the Bishop, who delivers him the symbols of his office and the priestly vestments. The curtain is then drawn to permit the ordinand to be vested.

When the ordinand is fully vested, he stands in front of the Bishop, who anoints his forehead and the palms both hands, calling him by a new name. After a short prayer, the Bishop hands to the ordinand the chalice and the paten containing the Reserved Sacrament as a sign that he can now celebrate the Liturgy. After this, the new priest blesses the congregation for the first time. As the choir starts singing the hymn, "Christ is revealed among us," all the priests kiss his forehead and hands. At the end of the service, members of the congregation come and kiss his hands.

"The Armenian Guardian" April 1958

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

On Priesthood

Q. In the Armenian Church how is seniority among priests determined?

A. There are several factors determining seniority among priests in the Armenian Church. In the first place celibate priests as a class enjoy seniority over married priests, such that even the youngest and most recently ordained celibate priest enjoys seniority over the oldest and most experienced married priest. Secondly, within each class of priests seniority is determined in general by priority of ordination, that is the longer a person has been ordained a priest the higher a position he has in the order of seniority. Age is not a consideration in determining seniority. A thirty year old vartabed, who has been ordained a monastic priest for five years, enjoys seniority over a forty year old vartabed who has been ordained for only three years. However the possessor of jurisdiction has seniority over all other priests of his class within the area of jurisdiction, such that a married priest who is the pastor of a certain church and has been ordained ten years enjoys seniority in his church and within his parish over guest married priests who have been ordained, for example, twelve, fourteen, seventeen and twenty years respectively. During church services, in such cases, the young pastor would occupy in the chancel the position of priority, and at a church function he would be the one to preside. The possession of jurisdiction affects the same way the seniority of celibate priests, and also that of bishops.

As for the various dignities, such as archpriest and archbishop, they do not affect seniority. A bishop who has been consecrated ten years enjoys seniority over an archbishop who has been consecrated only eight years. But of course in his own diocese a bishop or archbishop enjoys seniority over all other bishops and archbishops regardless of chronological seniority.

As for apeghas (monastic priests), vartabeds (monastic priests who have also received the rank of “vartabed”) and dzayrakooyn vartabeds (monastic priests who have also the ranks of the “vartabedootiun”) the present practice is to determine seniority on the basis of the number of years since ordination to the monastic priesthood regardless of any additional ranks received. Accordingly an apegha who has been ordained a monastic priest for ten years enjoys seniority over a dzayrakooyn vartabed who has been ordained a monastic priest only seven years even though the latter has received the additional ranks of vartabed and dzayrakooyn vartabed. (In our opinion this practice does not seem logical since the ranks of the vartabedootiun are not simply dignities but they are actually ranks conferred with elaborate liturgical ceremonies and the reception of those ranks ought to have some bearing on seniority.) In the case of married priests who have afterwards entered the monastic state their seniority is determined by the number of years since their entrance into that state.

VERY REV. MESROB SEMERJIAN
“The Armenian Guardian” July-August 1959

THE HEAD AND HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

THE HEAD OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

THE CHURCH AND ITS AUTHORITY

Our Lord Jesus Christ founded the Church as a visible spiritual organization. He always referred to it as the Kingdom of God. By the use of the word “Kingdom”, he implied that there must be in the church an organized authority.

The purpose of the Church is to continue the work of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and this work cannot be carried out without an organization in which some functionaries have special authorities. In fact, these authorities were vested in the Apostles from the very beginning by our Lord Himself.

While He was on earth, Our Lord chose twelve apostles to whom he gave three special powers: to preach, to sanctify and to rule the Church. References to these powers are to be found in the New Testament: Matthew 28:19; John 20:23 and Matthew 18:18.

Wherever the Apostles went, they not only preached the new religion of Christ and baptized the converts, but they also became the supervisors of the churches they had founded and gave decisions in all sorts of matters as judges.

Now it was the intention of Christ that His Apostles have successors. He said that the Church would last until the end of the world and it goes without saying that this intention could not be fulfilled without people who would continue the work of the Apostles, having the same powers.

WHAT IS THE APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION?

The Apostles preached first in Jerusalem. But their commission was to convert the whole world. Therefore, they went all over the known world of that time and wherever they went, they chose assistants. According to the positions

that these assistants were going to hold in the community, they were given special powers by the Apostles. Before leaving a newly established church, an Apostle would designate someone to take his place and would transfer to him all his powers. This transference of special powers was not done merely by a declaration, but by a ceremony, the main feature of which was “laying on” of hands. The Apostles ordained their assistants and successors.

Those who received only a limited authority were called “deacons” (In Armenian, “sargavak” i.e. servers). Those who were given more extensive authority, were called priests (“kahana” i.e. elders); those who succeeded the Apostles themselves with equal authorities, were called bishops (“yebisgobos” i.e. supervisors).

Thus, all bishops ordained their successors, the first bishops being the Apostles themselves. To this uninterrupted series of ordinations we refer to by the phrase “Apostolic Succession”. Some churches do not have the Apostolic Succession. The Armenian Church has had continued unbroken Apostolic Succession throughout its existence.

DOES THE CHURCH NEED A VISIBLE HEAD?

It is essential for the church to have a visible head. A chief executive is needed by all organized societies and in this respect a church is no exception.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal invisible head of the Church; it needs, on earth, a visible spiritual chief executive so that it may work as an organized society. The Armenian Church has its visible head; he is called Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians.

WHO IS PATRIARCH-CATHOLICOS?

As elsewhere, so also in Armenia, the Apostles ordained deacons and priests. They also ordained their own successors, before they themselves were martyred, to supervise the whole

Christian flock of Armenia. These successors were the first bishops of the Armenian Church.

Beginning with the year 301, when the whole Armenian people were converted into Christianity, the head of the Armenian Church assumed a new title: Catholicos. The term comes from a Greek word meaning “General”. He is also called Patriarch, which means “Chief among the fathers”. The Armenian word for Patriarch is “Hairabed”.

WHAT IS THE OFFICE OF PATRIARCH-CATHOLICOS?

1. The Catholicos is the sole and universal head and ruler of the Armenian Church all over the world. As such, he has precedence of jurisdiction and honor over all the other dignitaries of the Armenian Church, including the Armenian Catholicos of Cilicia (now residing in Antelias, Lebanon) and the Armenian Patriarchs of Jerusalem and Constantinople. His spiritual jurisdiction extends over all the Armenian churches of the world, no matter where they are. He is the center and symbol of unity of the Armenian churches and communities throughout the world.

2. He enjoys the exclusive titles of “Chief Bishop”, “Catholicos of All Armenians”, and “Supreme Patriarch of the Mother See of Etchmiadzin”. He calls himself “Servant of Jesus Christ”.

3. He alone can ordain bishops for the Armenian Church with the assistance of at least two other bishops. Therefore, all candidates to the office of bishop must go to the headquarters of the church to be ordained directly by the hands of His Holiness the Catholicos.

4. He alone can confer the honorary titles of “Archbishop” and “Archpriest” by a formal encyclical.

5. The Catholicos alone can bless and consecrate the “Holy Myron”, the sacred oil. With this oil are confirmed all Armenian Christians following their baptism. With this oil are anointed all the priests and the bishops of the Armenian

Church as well as the Catholicos himself, at the time of their ordination.

6. He bestows the order of St. Gregory the Enlightener upon those people who in some special manner have distinguished themselves in furthering the welfare of the Armenian Church and people.

7. He summons the National Ecclesiastical Assembly for important occasions.

8. He writes encyclicals through which he conveys his paternal exhortations and pastoral orders to the whole church or some part thereof. Through them, he also expresses his satisfaction and sends his paternal benediction to such organizations or individuals who have served the Church and nation by outstanding deeds or donations.

HOW IS THE CATHOLICOS ADDRESSED?

The Catholicos is addressed as “His Holiness”, “His Majesty”, “Most Holy Father”. He signs only his first or Christian name. His family name is seldom used.

The throne or the See, which the Catholicos occupies, is called “The Mother See”, “The Supreme See of Holy Etchmiadzin”, “The See of St. Thaddeus the Apostle”, or the “See of our Holy Father St. Gregory the Enlightener”.

WHAT ARE HIS DISTINCTIVE MARKS?

The vestments of the Catholicos both in the church and outside the church are similar to that of any bishop, except that he wears a diamond cross on his hood. Along with his vestments, at the Divine Liturgy he carries a Gonkair, symbol of his office as the Supreme Shepherd of the flock. His Crosier is mounted by a cross and he wears his ring, the sign of authority, on his ring finger and not on his small finger as all the other bishops do.

HOW IS THE CATHOLICOS ELECTED?

The Catholicos is elected for life by the National Ecclesiastical Assembly. This Assembly is composed of (a) all the “Arachnorts” (Primates) of the Dioceses of the Armenian Church. (b) All the bishops of the Armenian Church (as a rule most of the bishops are Arachnorts). (c) Lay delegates from each diocese. Lay delegates form the majority in the Assembly, because every diocese should send for each 25,000 people or fraction thereof one delegate. The Assembly convenes at the Mother Cathedral of Etchmiadzin. Each member is free to give his vote to the candidate of his choice. After the election the Catholicos is anointed with an imposing ceremony.

THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

The ecclesiastical metropolis of the Church of Armenia and Seat of our Catholicos is called “Etchmiadzin.” Which means, “the descent of the Only Begotten (son of God).” It is so called in commemoration of a vision of Christ to St. Gregory the Enlightener, the greatest apostle of the Armenian Church. Etchmiadzin stands upon the site where Christ, descending from heaven, appeared to St. Gregory and appointed the spot where the Mother Church of the country was to be built. It is an ancient and famous Monastery, not far from Mt. Ararat. The small town in which the monastery is established also has the same name.

In the construction of the Church, St. Gregory had the cooperation of the first Christian king, Tirdat or Tiridates the Great, King of Armenia. It was built in 303 A.D. The original structure having gone to ruin during an earthquake, it was restored in 618 A.D. most probably on the former plan. So it is reasonable to assume that today we have our Mother Church, more or less, on the same plan as that on which it was built by St. Gregory in the beginning of the fourth century.

A GREAT CHRISTIAN OUTPOST

Etchmiadzin has played an important part not only in our national life but has also served as a Christian outpost in the East.

Etchmiadzin is one of the most important Christian centers in the East, although this fact is not generally well known in the West. As such it has been one of the chief guardians of Christian Faith in the Near East. Christianity has maintained an honorable position in Etchmiadzin in spite of almost uninterrupted persecutions and insults to which eastern Christians have been subjected. Here the seed of Christianity was cherished when it might have been choked up by weeds of idolatry or of inferior religions like Zoroastrianism or Islam. Here it is preserved by a devotion of heart and sacrifice of blood which few other Christian nations would have made. But its beneficial influence has been greater among the people whose religious center it is.

After the disappearance of the political power of Armenia, it was in Etchmiadzin that the collective will of the Armenians was centralized. Etchmiadzin has not only played the role of a State but also kept alive the undying fires of the national independence.

CENTER OF NATIONAL UNITY

With the dispersal of an important part of the Armenians to the four corners of the world, Etchmiadzin became the magnetic pole which held together the different communities of Armenians in the Diaspora. It was also the meeting place of various sections of the nation. Pilgrims from the heart of the country and as far as from the banks of the Ganges and Nile, Volga and Danube, from the shores of the Bosphorus and the Persian Gulf, first met and became acquainted with each other in Etchmiadzin, and rekindled the flame of fraternal life and unity. From all these countries, clergy came to Etchmiadzin to be consecrated as Bishops and to carry "Sourp Myron", the Holy Chrism, which the

Catholicos alone can consecrate. Thus unity of the National Church was constantly preserved.

INITIATOR OF EDUCATION

Etchmiadzin has efficiently preserved the love and the initiative for national education, as far as the conditions of the times permitted, and in the course of time has intensified its educational activities. All the educational establishments were administered by the Church authorities under the supervision of Etchmiadzin. In the last century the three highest academies for Eastern Armenians, namely Lazarian in Moscow, Nersesian in Tiflis, and Kevorkian in Etchmiadzin, were established by the Patriarchs of our Church. At these academies, especially in Kevorkian in Etchmiadzin, were trained generations of devoted clergymen as well as laymen who created the Renaissance of Armenian culture, and provided the leaders in the life of the Church and the nation.

With the rise of a new Armenian State, the Church, relieved of its temporal duties, which the pressure of time had place upon its shoulders, is able to devote once again, all its energies to the spiritual elevation of the people.

THE LATE OCCUPANT OF THE HOLY SEE

Until recently the throne of St. Gregory the Enlightener was occupied by the beloved and venerated figure of His Holiness, Kevork the Sixth, Catholicos of All Armenians, who passed away on May 9, 1954, at the age of 86. He was a courageous and devoted Chief Pontiff, who, wisely guided the Church through the dangers of the war years and thereafter, and was able to raise the position and prestige of the Armenian Church once again.

It was through his efforts that Etchmiadzin was once again put on its historic path of progress. The Kevorkian Academy, which was closed after the First World War, was

reopened in 1945. New recruits are coming forward to join the ranks of its clergy.

Etchmiadzin is the center from which radiated the light carrying with it the fatherly love, the encouragement and the ecclesiastical authority of the head of the Armenian Church to its people and towards which is directed the filial attachment, veneration and fruits of gratitude by all the members of the Mother Church of Armenia.

PAMPHLET No. 3

Published by

The Diocese of the Armenian Church of California

SOME OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING REFORM IN THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

Political upheavals and successive national disasters have prevented the long overdue reform of the Armenian Church from being seriously discussed and acted upon. Since the issue of reform is once more under consideration by Holy Etchmiadzin, we give below the authoritative view of Archbishop Papken (later Catholicos of Cilicia) on some of the external aspects of the problem of reform. Other aspects of the reform issue by Archbishop Papken will be presented in subsequent issues of THE ARMENIAN CHURCH Monthly.

A close relationship between faith and worship exists. We can note that relationship if we compare every word in the Creed with the various parts of the Liturgy. All hymns under the Canon of Resurrection, for instance, are addressed to the Godhood and the risen Christ. The hymns under the Canon for the Repose of Souls are glorifications of the immortality of the soul. Those under the Canon of the Martyrs not only glorify the victory of the saints, but commemorate the immortal souls, assured that the immortals have not ceased their relationship with mortals who are still living and trusting in their intercession. All the prayers and hymns of the liturgy imply that the people stand in the mystical presence of a living God. Services and rites in principle are but symbolic expressions of man's relation to his Creator. Just as the mind and soul through their mystical sublimation and vision commune with God, the mystic rites and rituals which are performed in the church serve as the symbolism of the very spiritual visions and sublimations, closely related psychological and religious realities defined through comprehensible expressions and palpable forms of ritual.

It then follows that the rites and rituals in our churches constitute the most practical and pleasant method of religious instruction. In order to make this method attractive, however, it is most essential that it be understandable and not

tedious. These two conditions play an important part in the work of religious edification. Thus in church reform one practical problem is to render the liturgy of the Armenian Church understandable to the people and not to bore them.

Is reform possible under this principle? Certainly it is. For in its essence the liturgy is intimately related to the Creed, and not to its external forms and manners of expression. The baptism of infants, according to the Canon, must take place on the eighth day, but today this provision is not respected. But baptism loses nothing of its symbolism if it takes place, instead of eight days in eight weeks or eight months. The Canon for interment has no relation to faith or creed. There are simple or so-called solemn funeral rites which are entirely external things, very secondary in import. Again, the canons for baptism and burial, when compared with old manuscripts, indicate that originally they were very brief and simple; the elaborations were introduced in keeping with the mentality of the times. Therefore, taking into consideration the demands of our time and environment, it is possible to reform them, for they are already being reformed according to the judgment of the officiating priests or at the request of the family of the deceased. It is possible to examine the manuscripts of the oldest canons of the Book of Rituals and to note one by one the differences, variables, additions, and changes that have been introduced, and to reorganize them in a more concise form.

Then what are the means for making church worship more understandable and not wearisome? They appear to us as follows:

1. The language.
2. Duration.
3. Attractiveness or appeal (the aesthetic content) of the forms of worship.
4. Active participation of the people in the worship.

Language

When you fail to speak to the people in language it understands, you cannot hold its interest in anything. The language of the Armenian Church is Grabar or Ancient Armenian, but the current language of the Armenian people is Modern Armenian, and in some special regions it is Turkish, Arabic, Kurdish, and in the Caucasus, aside from Armenian, also Georgian and Russian.*

The fact remains that the Armenian people are not in a position to understand the language of their Church. Even in the purely Armenian-speaking communities people have difficulty to understand the Grabar, not to say they do not understand. For even though both ancient and modern Armenian are Armenian, they differ in grammar, even though making use of the same lexicon.

The fact is that the intelligence of Armenian clergymen has overcome the difficulties resulting from the incomprehensibility of language by assigning certain important parts in the worship to the current language of the people, and that, without resorting to formal reform. The sermon is delivered everywhere in the language which people understand. Similarly, in various localities lections have been rendered into the language of the people. Even in Jerusalem, specifically in the Bethlehem church, the Gospel on the Birth of Christ is read in Arabic. Moreover, long prayers (from Chrysostom and Lambronatzi), for blessing the waters, the Jashou counsels on Maundy Thursday, the long prayer during the washing of the feet, are read by competent clergymen in Modern Armenian while the gdag of the Good Friday evening has been replaced by a timely sermon. These unofficial reforms indicate that the requirements of the time and environment have made it imperative that important parts of the worship be made understandable to the people. This fact, moreover, indi-

*¹ One may add the languages which are daily becoming dominant in comparatively recent Armenian communities, such as French, English, and Spanish. Ed. ACM.

cates that it is possible to enlarge the area of understandability. For instance, the lections, which hold an important place in worship and are essential in declaring the message of the Bible, should be rendered into our beautiful Armenian language.

Our laymen should read the Bible in their homes and hear selected readings in the church in the language they understand. Our Modern Armenian is as sacred as the Grabar. Since Modern Armenian is the language of our home, our social relations, our schools, our literature, our press, and of the private prayers of each one of us, why should that language be not placed on the same footing in our services, as necessary?

Of course, there are lightened conservatives who are not inclined to favor even the rendition of the lections into Armenian. But it is one thing to be an admirer of Grabar, and it is another thing to meet the people's need, the regeneration and revitalization of the Church's spiritual life.

If our Modern Armenian were spoken at the time of Sahak and Mesrop, they certainly would have translated it into modern Armenian. Our Savior declared that Sabbath was for man, and not Man for Sabbath. By the same token, language is for man and not man for the language.

Duration

It is very essential to reduce the duration of the liturgy so as not to make it wearisome. In human economy everything has its limits. It is not advisable to overeat even the most tasty meal. It is not possible to listen to a long sermon of many hours duration no matter how eloquent and inspiring it may be. It is not possible to hear a musical masterpiece for four or five hours. The human intellect becomes fatigued, satiated. A long service of liturgy, even if it is perfect in every respect becomes wearisome. The faithful have also other duties to perform in the struggle for existence. The conditions and modes of living have changed and continue to change with the times, whereby each century leaves its own

imprint upon all human institutions, among which the church cannot be an exception.

Thus the Armenian Church also has conformed to the demands of the times. The church's schedule of worship, for instance, was divided into seven hours, similar to that of the Israelites, and subsequently had been increased to nine. Even though it has so remained in the Book of Hours, it has become condensed into two parts as morning and evening services, with noon (Jashou) services only during Lent. It is worth noting that the hours of worship of the Armenian Church essentially were devised for monastic life and environment, for the principal task of the monastics was to hold hourly services. This was impossible to put into practice in the city churches, and presently, not only the seven or nine hours have been reduced to two sections, even the latter arrangement is not in force in many places. In the dispersion, especially, a brief morning service followed by the Divine Liturgy, on Sundays, are considered sufficient, owing to the requirements and mode of living in other lands. Even in traditionalist churches, for instance, here at St. James (Jerusalem), it has been possible to make abbreviations and abridgements, according to the demand of circumstances.

It has been noted that the Armenian people as a rule come to church in larger numbers during the singing of "Park-i-Partsouns" where the Gospel is read, during the Badarak, or when the sermon is given. Of course, the reason is that these parts of the liturgy are very joyous, there is music, life and movement. Therefore, upon enjoying the sections which are of interest to them, worshippers leave the service.

We have introduced this observation as pointing to the conclusion that it is not the lengthy services which will improve and renew the spiritual life of the Armenian people. It should not be forgotten that the church is a school of spiritual instruction for the faithful. In order for the school to inspire its pupils and hold their interest it is imperative that it does not prove tiresome. A slow-paced, ponderous, lengthy

service cannot interest, cannot inspire, on the contrary it becomes boring and sends away people from church.

Form and Manner

The form and manner of divine worship, that is, the aesthetic quality is related to the question of duration.

We seek beauty in everything; it is a demand of the human spirit. Religion is a thing of mystic texture and the mysteries of the church are best reflected in beauty. The church is an institution, with its architecture and ornamentations, the church as people, with their refinement, deportment, movement, and expression, in short, the church as a living body in all the forms of worship, must reflect refinement and beauty. In other words, good taste must prevail, as far as possible.

We owe to the period of Nersess the Gracefilled (Graceful) the style of vestments and music used in our Divine Liturgy, in which Nersess of Lambron performed a noteworthy role. Tastes had become more refined, owing to closer relations with the West. For instance, Nersess of Lambron states that at the monasteries of Haghat and Sanahin they celebrated the Divine Liturgy in their monastic garb. Moreover, we owe to the Cilician era the further development of our church music.

But it is not enough to have hymns and it is not enough to sing them; it is necessary to understand what one is singing and to sing according to the requirements of the art. All the activities of the church must reflect grace and beauty.

It is regrettable that often aesthetic refinement is absent in our churches in the course of the Divine Liturgy. We need not list here all that is lacking in grace and are aesthetically undesirable, and have been practiced for so long as not to be readily noticed, and may even cause surprise when pointed out. However, we wish to call attention only to a few principal points.

a. Repetitions. It is essential to put an end to all repetitions which lengthen the duration, without destroying the

design in, for instance, psalms, lections, and sharagans, etc. Repetitions are contrary to the rule of aesthetic refinement.

b. Care in the manner of performing the services. All readings (prayers, Bible, psalms, responses, litanies) should be delivered with faultless enunciation, ringing like silver, spirited, so as to capture the attention of the faithful. Similarly the singing should be done in a joyous manner and at a brisk pace. An extremely slow tempo, both in choral and solo parts, is an excellent way of boring the people.

c. Solemnity of the Sanctuary. Services in our churches often lose a great deal from their solemnity because of inattention to elementary rules of deportment ... We believe that in the course of divine worship proper deportment, grace of expression and refinement are vitally important.

d. One of the ways to render the service meaningful and impressive is to secure the active participation of the faithful. Let it not be supposed that this is a novelty. On the contrary, it is a forgotten discarded beautiful custom in our church. People come to church in order to pray; therefore, they must actively participate in all the various forms and expressions of prayer ... The people must not assume a passive attitude during divine worship. Do you know what the duty of the deacons is? The deacons direct the clergy and the faithful to perform, in the proper turn, their share in the worship, and sometimes address both groups to take part together in the worships, as when they say: "Let us all say in unison, 'Lord have mercy'." At present, to this invitation by the deacon, the response comes, sometimes from the choir, sometimes from a solo singer; the throng of the faithful, however, remains silent, as if the invitation was not directed to it. In the old "Book of the Hours" the people's parts were indicated with "and the people respond" or "and respond."

We do not wish to enter into details in order to stress the importance of the point. We suffice by adding that even though the choir represents the people in the course of divine worship, it is not enough to justify the passivity of the people.

The people must join in the singing and praying in the church, sometimes softly, sometimes loudly, as required. But this is not something that can be brought about simply by wishing or through compulsion. It is necessary to educate the people.

Let us stress that what we have said here are not new ideas, but forgotten beautiful customs. They must be restored. This effort will constitute one of the most useful features of our church reform.

ARCHBISHOP PAPKEN GULESSERIAN

“The Armenian Church” November 1970

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH WITH OTHER CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

*** Editorial Note:**

This religious educational material is adapted from the 1952 Year Book of the Association of Armenian Church Choirs of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America.

The Basic Difference

There are churches that hold with us the same truths, churches that refuse to do so, and other organized communities that have not heard, or do not care to listen to our message. It is these circumstances that determine our attitude toward or relationship with them.

Yet in spite of its being that of a now small people, the Armenian Church tradition is sound and solid enough to stand proudly, shining with truths, even when it is taken apart for purposes of comparative study.

The Church and many churches

What is the Church? There have been as many answers as there were schools of Christian thought to this question. We propose to consider the following:

The church is the entire world throughout its history when it (the world) is looked at from the standpoint of its reconciliation with God.

The world was estranged from God on account of Adam's sin. Jesus Christ's being made man, and His death on the cross, healed this estrangement. There are many circumstances which make it possible for this – let us say ideally on church – to be actually one, i.e. one, administratively and in doctrine.

We sometimes say the church will be one “in the future”. But “future” is a name given to that which is not but

which is expected, hope for, or yearned after. In this sense it is unreservedly correct and legitimate to say that the church will actually be one in the future.

It follows that although we speak and presumably will speak for a long time to come of churches, the plural form of this word should not lead us to believe that the oneness of the Christian Church according to Christian theology is impaired in any serious sense. Although the form of the word is plural its meaning is singular inasmuch as it refers to a reconciled one world. The word “churches” may perhaps be likened to the word “series”, for example, which is also plural in form and singular in meaning.

Ecumenical Councils

An ecumenical council is a meeting of the whole church represented by her bishops. The most significant part of an ecumenical council is its implicit rejection of the authority of one man in matters of faith.

The ecumenical council is different from ordinary councils or meetings in this that while in ordinary meetings decisions are made, in ecumenical councils they are literally arrived at. At ecumenical meetings there are invocations to the Holy Spirit in which He is asked to enlighten the minds of those present. Truth is not fabricated in these meetings. It is discovered. No one decides anything. As a result of their receptive attitude and humble research they see, as it were, what God had decided for man to see from all eternity. And those who fail to see this “decision” are anathematized. They are thrown out of the congregation of the faithful. At the Council of Nicaea, for example, the two bishops, out of the 318 who did not give their assent to the formula defining the Godhead of the Son, were excommunicated and subjected to political exile.

The adjective “ecumenical” comes from the Greek word “oikoumene” which means the inhabited world. Belief in the authority of the Council is based on the saying of our Lord,

“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am in midst of them.”

The earliest councils of the Christian church are reported in the Book of Acts. “Ecumenical Councils” have been held ever since, at Carthage for instance, and elsewhere, but the first great ecumenical council that the Church recognizes is that of the Nicaea. This council begins what some historians refer to as the Age of Councils during which the basis of the Christian faith were laid down. The Age of Councils follows the Age of Persecutions.

The Edict of Milan

Most people are familiar with the incident at the Milanese Bridge where the Emperor Constantine saw a large cross in the sky bearing the inscription “Hoc sign vinces” – (With this same sign thou shalt win). Whether the story of this vision is true or not, Constantine won the battle in 312 and then he issued the famous Edict of Milan granting religious toleration to all the citizens of the Roman Empire. In 323 he gave his standard a Christian form and in 325 he himself signed the letter of convocation for the Council of Nicaea.

As long as the Church was being persecuted as a whole differences of opinion inside the Church had not come to the fore. Resistance to the common enemy, mainly to the emperor, kept important divergences of views in abeyance. But now that problems of Christian belief could be freely discussed, questions as to the formulation of the basic convictions of the Church were raised. And the dogma should above all conform to the requirements of logic. But there was no satisfactory way of logically formulating the fact that Jesus Christ was God, and yet they were both, and the Holy Spirit, the same and one God.

Tertullian, one of the earliest church fathers, writes as follows: “The simple (I will not call them unwise and unlearned) who always constitute the majority of believers are startled at the economy on the ground that their very rule of faith with-

draws them from the world's plurality of gods to one and only true God ... They are constantly throwing out against us that we are preachers of two gods and three gods."

Arius and his Teaching

The man who tried to satisfy such questions that were raised in the minds of "the simple" is Arius. In the controversy about the Godhead of Christ he is the main figure. He was a man well trained in logic and wanted to achieve the impossible, namely, he wanted to place within the framework of the human mind the mystery of the Holy Trinity. In his endeavor to do this he removed from the Holy Trinity its mysterious nature. This is what he said:

"God is one and supreme. Outside of God, the Creator and Father of all, everything is created. So therefore is the Son." However, all the Orthodox fathers had taught from the beginning that the Son, the second person in the Holy Trinity, is not created, but is Creator. Arius had no objection to the Son's being creator, but in order to make the issue simply understandable he said that He was creator in a special sense, namely, He was the only agent of God through whom the work of creation could be affected. The Son was a creature but he was unique. God created him for the specific purpose of creating through him, the world. Thus, the Son's specific mission was to make the world for which he received the "material" and "orders or instructions" from God the Father.

Arius, well versed in Greek philosophy, proceeded with therefores and ifs. If, he said, the Son is the true Son, then the Father must have existed before the Son, therefore, there was a time when the Son did not exist. Therefore, He is created or made. This question seems to many today, and seemed to many at the time, an unimportant play of words. The emperor himself was very much annoyed. He wrote a letter to Arius in which there is the celebrated phrase, "Having made a careful inquiry into the origin and foundation of these differences, I find the cause to be of truly insignificant cha-

racter.” The truth is that had the Arians won, there would be no Christian Church today because mankind would have been tired of worshipping an extraordinary man. There are many people who do this even today.

The Council of Nicaea

In the year 325, 318 bishops met in Nicaea to consider this matter of the Holy Trinity and the formulation of the Creed was the result of their meeting. This Creed is, with more additions, what we say or sing during Holy Badarak in Church every Sunday. We declare that we believe “in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only begotten, that is, of one substance with the Father by whom all things both in heaven and on earth are made.” The most controversial phrase in this passage is “that is, of one substance with the Father.” A considerably large part of the time of the Council of Nicaea was devoted to the Greek word that corresponds to this phrase. The word is “homo-ousion.” Those who were more or less in favor of Arius’ teachings wanted to use the word “homoi-ousion.” The difference is the letter “i” which makes the word to mean not of the same substance but, “of like substance.” Had not the Orthodox been meticulous, and if for the sake of harmony they had given in, the inclusion of this letter “i” would have destroyed the Christian Church. And this bit of information is particularly apropos today when so many of our numbers are ready to sacrifice everything for the sake of harmonious relations with people of other convictions.

The struggle between the Orthodox and the Arians lasted some 50 years. The champions of the Orthodox faith in this fierce fight were Sts. Athanasius of Alexandria (Egypt); Basil of Caesarea (Cappadocia); Gregory of Nyssa (Asia Minor); and somewhat later, Gregory of Nazianzus (Asia Minor).

The Council of Constantinople

It is said that truth rides on the back of error. The error of Arius had helped the church establish the truth about the divinity of Christ the Lord. Although the Council of Nicaea had mentioned the divinity also of the Holy Spirit it had not nevertheless placed on it enough emphasis.

The Arian controversy had come to some sort of an end with the death of an Arian emperor (Valens). Now a man by the name of Macedonius began to go about and say that the Holy Spirit was a minister and a servant and not truly God. Macedonius placed the Holy Spirit on the same level as that of the angels. The new emperor Theodosius summoned another council at Constantinople in 381. This council established the divinity of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity.

The Council of Ephesus

The third ecumenical council recognized by the Armenian Church is that of Ephesus. This Council dealt with the implications of the issues with which Nicaea had concerned itself. On the surface the Council of Ephesus was concerned with the word Theotokos meaning “(She who) bore God.” The corresponding Armenian word is “Asdvadzadzin.” Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, from 428-431, was opposed to the use of the word because he feared that it might minimize and eventually destroy the humanity of Our Lord. Nestorius is the classical example of those who fall into one error while they are busy avoiding another. He was rather ruthless in the persecution of heretics. Said he to the emperor, “Give me, O Prince, the earth purged heretics and I will give as recompense.” Nevertheless his teachings, carried to their logical conclusion, would destroy the divinity of Christ altogether. Although he was condemned by the Council of Ephesus (431) his followers spread their brand of Christianity into countries as far as China. He himself died in exile in 451.

This is the year of the Battle of the Vardanians and of the celebrated Council of Chalcedon that the Armenian Church did not accept.

The Council of Chalcedon

Because the theme of the deliberations of this Council revolves around the natures of Christ some churches accuse us of holding the belief that Christ is not man, but God with only a touch of humanity. This is not the case. It is true that unlike the Western Church, and inasmuch as we are an eastern people imbued with mysticism, we stand in awe before the eternal miracle of God's becoming Man, and our attention is concentrated, as witnessed by our hymns and the general spirit of our Divine Liturgy, on the divine nature of the man Jesus; but we never refused to recognize that Jesus Christ was God and perfect Man. Chalcedon decided that Jesus Christ was one person with two natures, human and divine, according to the famous "Letter", "Tome" or "Dissertation" of Pope Leo I. We do not agree with this formula and we say Jesus Christ was one person with one nature, human and divine.

The character of the pronouncements of the Council of Chalcedon were not as clear in the 5th century as they are now, or rather as they were in the following centuries. Shortly before Chalcedon another Council was held, called "Latrocinium" or "The Robber Council" (Ephesus 449) in which the views of Eutyches (a heretic condemned by our Church) were upheld. He was supported by the emperor and opposed by Flavian, Bishop of Constantinople, who was condemned at the so-called Latrocinium.

The situation was therefore terribly confused, and without a leisurely and detailed study it was impossible to know exactly the feeling, then, of the whole Church. This study was exactly what our clergymen of the time could not indulge in, involved as they were in their war against the Persians. It is also possible our "monophysitism" was not an

avowed teaching but an implication of our refusal or even delay to accept Chalcedon, which refusal nevertheless was solidified into positive statements in the year 506 at a Council in which the Georgians and the Caspian Albanians (Azerbaijan) participated and which was presided over by the Armenian Catholicos, Babgen I.

It is at this point that our relationship with other churches becomes articulate.

Four Groups of Christian Churches

The Armenian Church distinguishes herself from the other Christian Orthodox churches of the world with the fact that it has come into existence in a particular country, to serve a particular people. Until the Council of Chalcedon she was distinguished by her use of the Armenian language. But this difference in language did not create any friction between our church and the other large sections of Christendom because our language was a perfectly adequate instrument to render any Greek text in all its details and niceties of form and content, and because, further, our writers and theologians spoke Greek as perfectly as the Greeks themselves.

After 451, the Armenian Church was only a portion of a body of Christians who rejected the formula of Chalcedon on the ground that it was not in line with the previous orthodox pronouncements of the first three ecumenical councils. Together with the other churches of this conviction we are sometimes referred to as “Monophysites.” (This word comes from the Greek monos, single, and physis, nature). We are usually referred to as the Lesser Eastern Orthodox Churches.

There are, from one point of view, four different groups of Christian churches. These are, in the order of their “closeness” to us, the Lesser Eastern Orthodox Churches, the Greater Eastern Orthodox Churches, the Roman Catholic Church (together with those of different rite that recognize nevertheless the unique authority of the Pope), and the various and

sundry Protestant churches and communities or denominations.

The Armenian Church and Protestantism

In the eleventh century the Greek Orthodox and the Roman Catholic churches parted company and from the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church came out Protestantism. Protestantism itself gave birth to a number of weird forms of Christianity.

The outstanding proof or sign that we have been, at least physically, in close relationship with Protestantism is the existence of our Protestant brothers. There are two main reasons why Protestantism could develop among Armenians even to the small extent to which it did.

An immediate circumstance that accounts for its appeal to some of our people is the economic security that accompanied their “acceptance” of Protestant teachings that were, moreover, presented by nationals of states of great prestige in the world. Protestant missionaries coming to the different cities of Turkey in the first half of the 19th century would assist Armenian individuals financially. Instances where the stoppage of economic help meant the end of “converted” Armenians going to Protestant prayer meetings indicate the decisive role of such help in the success of the endeavors of the missionaries.

The second reason for which Protestantism could have access to some elements in the Armenian population of Turkey is more general. It is the fact that there was a crying need for regeneration, education, and reform within the Armenian Church herself. The necessary participation of our Church in our national struggle for survival tended to make her seem more nationalistic in character than religious-spiritual. It was both natural and sensible that our Church should concentrate, in times of crisis, on the survival of the nation first. That meant, for the Church, concern for herself. This was in a profound sense of religious endeavor, since the nation is the

“material” of which our church is built. Preserving the nation, the church was preserving herself. Her purely spiritual character was nevertheless fading, and there were movements within the church for its restoration. Yet Armenian clergy and laymen alike were careful to point out that reform should not be confused with faith and “apostasy”.

This is precisely what some people did not understand and at times, with good will and some conviction, followed Protestant teachers. The origin of an organized Armenian Protestant group goes back to 1822. Levy Parsons and Pliny Fisk were the first missionaries that came into contact with the Armenian people in the Near East.

Protestants have been useful to our nation with the schools that they established. They caused us indirectly to work for the better fulfillment of the mission of our Church. But for Protestantism as such there was no appreciable room in the Armenian Church.

Practically every single aspect of Protestantism can be explained merely by looking at it from the point of view of rejection of authority. Luther said that faith was enough for salvation. No authority was needed to interpret the Bible – no authority (Church) had to intervene between man and God. We cannot subscribe to this religious philosophy because we know that without the Armenian Church we cannot be saved, not only as individuals but also as a nation. And this is not merely a theological saying. We know that our Church did save us even in our time.

In spite of our profound difference in religious beliefs and outlook we understand the presence of Protestantism in our midst as well as their religious opinions and collective feelings. Circumstances beyond the control of the Mother Church made their coming into existence inevitable. We hope and pray, nevertheless, that as the “Mother Church” grows stronger and meets her appointed mission more adequately, mistakes of omission and of commission by all parties will be corrected.

The Armenian Church and Roman Catholicism

The formation of an Armenian Roman Catholic community goes back to the 18th century. The first Armenian (Roman) Catholic Church services were held in Beria (Aleppo) on December 30, 1738. We had come into contact with the Roman Catholics much before that date, however, when political circumstances compelled large Armenian groups to move to Cilicia where we later established a kingdom. Everybody knows that the Armenians were of great help to the Crusaders who tried to liberate, under the orders of the Pope, the Holy Land from Moslem domination. Jesuit missionaries have worked among Armenians ever since and have spared none of their methods to make their work as effective as possible.

Today, the head of the Roman Catholic Armenian Church claims he is the successor of Abraham Ardzivian. He was consecrated bishop in 1710 by a rival Patriarch-Catholicos, named Pidzac, and his consecration has never been accepted as valid. We cannot deny, of course, that Armenian (Roman) Catholic religious orders and congregations, with headquarters in Italy, have later made considerable contributions to Armenian literature, mainly with their critical studies in history. But their views on our Church and its history have been biased, more often than not, on account of their acceptance of the Pope's unique authority. In more recent times, before ecumenical movements of our time, they have put out publications in which history is rather obviously distorted in their favor.

Our relationship with the Armenian Catholic and with the Roman Catholic Church cannot be said to be particularly intimate, both "diplomatically" and dogmatically. There is, of course, the issue of Chalcedon, which is a historical rather than actual cause of separation. There is the so-called filioque controversy; they maintain that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. There is the fact that we do not use statues in our churches and they do. We do and they do not receive Holy Communion in the two species of bread and

wine; they receive only transubstantiated bread. They believe in Purgatory, in the Immaculate Conception and they have made a dogma of the Assumption of the Virgin. There are differences and above all the dogma of the Infallibility of the Pope.

This last Roman dogma is of the greatest importance which importance is not due however to its theological connotations. The infallibility of the Pope is the Roman way of maintaining that the Church is infallible. We also believe that the Church is infallible, that she does not err, but we cannot place this infallibility in the judgment or inspiration of one person. We have no evidence to believe, as they claim, that the Pope is the successor of Saint Peter. Even if he were his successor, he, as an individual bishop, could not be “God’s representative” on earth. The Church was not built on Saint Peter alone, but on all the apostles as a group of disciples.

Christianity was preached in Armenia by two apostles, Sts. Thaddeus and Bartholomew; it was established by St. Gregory the Enlightener; it was developed by the Armenian people and adapted, as it should be, to their needs and ethos. These circumstances legitimately require that they have their own liturgical language and supreme pontiff, while sharing the essentials of their faith with other Christian Orthodox and Catholic bodies. This is according to the truism that truth is one, although it manifests itself in different shades in the case of different communities.

We are, of course, anxious as anyone else to see actually One, Holy, Apostolic, and Catholic (Universal) Church, and we believe that the highest authority on earth of this Church is the Assembly or Council of the bishops of the different churches, from the different parts of the world, each having a different background and tradition and each seeing the truth from a particular angle. Only in such a council can eternal and universal truth, inspired by the Holy Spirit, be formulated for the benefit of all generations to come such as the case is for the three earliest Ecumenical Councils.

Yet in spite of this and the other divergences, there are no great differences in our respective creeds. We accept

the validity of the Roman Catholic orders, although we are not in communion with the Roman Church.

The Armenian Church and the Greek Orthodox Churches

It was in 1054 that the Latin and Greek provinces of the Christian world finally separated. There were of course many immediate reasons for this separation, but the main reason that englobes them all is perhaps very simple. It is one of ethos.

Due to their profound mysticism the Eastern peoples were concerned mainly with God. The theologians of the West were concerned with Man and his Destiny. Also Greek theology is less definite, less clear cut. Roman theology has a well-defined answer to every question, no matter how casual. Where the Greek Church has an attitude, a broad “position” to offer as an answer to some of the individual questions of her faithful, the Roman Catholic Church leaves no such latitude in her answers. These are all carefully formulated and offered ready to be used. As a consequence, the Eastern churches rely less on details of dogmatic formulations than on the spiritual insight of the Church for the practice of their God-given religion.

The Armenian Church belongs to the group of Eastern Churches. In spite of interminable quarrels (until the 12th century), it is difficult to point out any well-defined and important differences between the Armenian and Greek theologies save the matter of accepting the fourth ecumenical council, namely the Council of Chalcedon. This main source of divergence is quite complicated and an unfortunate accident.

Yet our close similarity with the Greeks has not always been a reason for very warm, friendly relations. Two tenants of the same apartment house can be much more disrespectful of each other than two total strangers. Since we were so close temperamentally and since we were of the same religious tradition, our differences were magnified beyond measure, and political consideration and personal rivalries added fuel to the fire.

Only in modern times there is a happy tendency in the Orthodox Churches to come closer to each other and discover a ground for mutual support and for cooperation. It should not be impossible, in these circumstances, to bring about a situation where all Orthodox Churches would be in communion. This is imperatively required both for the sake of the eternal destiny of the younger members of these churches and for the accomplishment of their more important and universal mission in the world.

Ever since the fifth century (451), we have not been in communion with the larger body of the Eastern Orthodox Churches such as the Greek and later the Russian, Serbian, Rumanian, and other churches, although we recognize the validity of their orders.

The Lesser Eastern Orthodox Churches

In spite of rather profound social and ethnic differences, we are in communion with the Lesser Eastern Orthodox Churches. To be “in communion” means to be allowed to receive the Holy Communion at each other’s Divine Liturgy (which is the center of Christian life), on account of oneness both ritually and in faith. We recognize, of course, the validity of each other’s orders.

There are five Lesser Eastern Churches: (1) The Armenian Church; (2) The Coptic Church (ancient Egyptian, main See: Alexandria); (3) The Ethiopian Church (having their headquarters in Addis Ababa); (4) The Syrian or Assyrian Church or Jacobite Church (with their main See historically at Antioch, now at Homs, Syria); and (5) The Assyrian or Syrian Church of Malabar (a province of India having their headquarters in Kerala).

The Coptic and Ethiopian on one hand and the Syrian Church of Antioch and the Armenian Church, the Indian Church of Malabar are closely related, having assumed a role of leadership historically.

Together we are about 15 million. In this group of five churches, the Armenian Church occupies a very important place and much is expected from her, as the leader of the Lesser Eastern Orthodox Churches.

All these five churches, all of which can trace their origin to the apostles and which were at one time very influential and prosperous, are not, today, at the height of their glory. This is a challenge. We want to be better organized and we want to progress in the service of our peoples and of God. We can do so if all of us are conscious of our moral and religious duties, if we are still enthused with the great objectives that these churches have pursued through the ages and are still called upon to pursue.

“THE TORCH BEARER” (JAHAGIR)

(St. John Armenian Church, Detroit)

January – March 1968

September – November 1968

THE ANCIENT MONASTERIES OF ARMENIA

The landscape of historic Armenia is studded with the remains of once busy and flourishing monastic centers of learning. Our indebtedness to those ancient institutions is very great, for it was they that kept Armenia's consciousness of its Christian heritage alive, despite the ravages of time. The history of Armenian monasteries and monastic life is yet to be written. His grace Archbishop Sion has tried to list below some of the better known monastic institutions in Armenia of which, alas, only a handful remain at present.

CENTERS OF LEARNING

Since time immemorial Armenians have been lovers of learning. As an Indo-European people they have been lovers of art and intellectual light. The Urartians possessed, before Christ, a high level of culture. Artavastes, son of Tigranes the Great, wrote poems and tragedies in Greek. During the Christian era Armenian students won renown in Byzantium and Athens. Broyeserius, the Armenian orator, won laurels for his eloquence, and in his honor a statue had been set up in Rome with the inscription, "Regina Rerum Roma Regi Eloquentia" (Rome, the Queen, to the King of Eloquence). The philosopher David the Invincible won honors in Byzantium. The Saints Sahag and Mesrob laid the foundation of Armenian literature by translating the Bible, thus creating our Golden Age during the fifth century.

The monasteries of Armenia were sources of intellectual light and culture. Some of them were known as universities.

THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

It would have been more precise to call them "schools" for Christians, that is, schools for tbirs (tbrevank). There existed also lay schools along with the Theological schools in the ancient period. At first all the schools were adjacent to the

churches or in monasteries; there were no public schools as at present. The monasteries were the first schools, the clergy the first teachers, and the tñirs were the first pupils. At these schools sons of the kings and nobility were tutored under the guidance of the vartabeds. The clergy were trained “at the feet” of the vartabeds.

There were two types of monastic schools – tbrevank and vartabedaran (school for doctors of theology). The first prepared psalmists, and choristers as well as readers (of the Bible). The second were translators of the Bible and preachers and interpreters.

The vartabedarans sometimes were called universities or academies, as the University or Vartabedaran of Siunik or Tatev or the academy of Amrtol, which taught theology and gave the degree of dsairakouyn vartabed (supreme doctorate). Some, as that of Jerusalem were called Jarankavoratz School or Undsayaran. Thus was designated the old school of Vagharchabad or Holy Etchmiadzin which later Catholicos Gevorg IV named Theological Seminary.

1. THE ERA OF THE ILLUMINATOR

St. Gregory the Illuminator trained priests and preachers from among the sons of the pagan priests. During the first century there were Greek and Syrian preachers in Armenia, for the Holy Bible was read in those two languages in the Armenian churches.

2. THE PERIOD OF NERSES THE GREAT

Nerses the Great became the reformer of the Armenian Church during the fourth century and the illuminator of the Armenian hearts. The historian Faustus of Byzantium states that he built monasteries, schools, hospitals, leper-homes and orphanages. He organized schools for the teaching of Greek and Syriac in all the province (page 783).

It is said that Nerses the Great founded some 2,000 such institutions in all the provinces of Armenia.

There were Greek schools in Caesarea and Syriac schools in Edessa (modern Ourfa). The Syriac Bishita translation of the Bible was done in the fourth century. In these schools the interpreters and translators were trained. St. Sahag, son of Nerses the Great, and Mesrob Vartabed Mashdotz, who became founders of Armenian letters and literature, belonged to these translators.

3. ERA OF SAHAG, MESROB

There was a Jarankavoratz School at Vagharshabad or Etchmiadzin which later became a vartabedaran for the purpose of training translators. Before the invention of the alphabet, St. Sahag taught at the Etchmiadzin School and had 60 students. Later St. Mesrob brought 40 other students. After the invention of the alphabet the first Armenian language school was opened as a vartabedaran with the aim of gathering students and teaching the newly invented letters, to educate them with the light of the New Testament, and to train preachers. Goriun the Magnificent, the pupil and biographer of St. Mesrob, states that “they gathered to teach and instruct the preachers.” The education-hungry Armenian youth came in large numbers to learn the Armenian alphabet and the holy Bible. This was the school of the translators who not only became the first preachers but also great interpreters and translators, and went to all sections of Armenia for the purpose of opening schools and preaching the scriptures. According to Goriun, Sahag and Mesrob became “pillars of the Church” and the great preachers of Christ’s Testament.

THE ROLE OF THE ARMENIAN MONASTERIES

The fourth century was the great era of monastery building in Caesarea. Soon after Nerses the Great also established hundreds of vanks in Armenia.

What was the role of the monasteries?

- a. The Armenian monasteries became the welders of the faith by training theologian vartabeds and preachers.
- b. They became the birthplace of Armenian letters and literature.
- c. They became the champions of the national spirit and values.
- d. They served as advisers to the Armenian court, to the kings and the nobles.
- e. They served as the sees of patriarchs and great arachnorts.
- f. After the loss of national independence, the vanks became veritable citadels of faith and national existence.
- g. The Armenian monasteries became the treasure house of our culture and art, literature, music, architecture, minia-ture and all the branches of Armenian art.

FAMOUS ARMENIAN MONASTERIES

Armenia had many monasteries which numbered at one time nearly 1000. A foreign author, Tournebes, places the figure at 500. There were more than 60 monasteries in Cilicia alone, according to Father Leon Alishan. It is worth noting the most famous among them.

- 1) The Etchmiadzin Vank of Vagharshabad, established during the fourth century.
- 2) The St. Garabed's Vank of Daron, with 400 members. It was a great intellectual center duting the sixth century. It is also known as Kлага Vank. The people called it "Mousho Sultan Soorp Garabed."
- 3) The Vank of Shirag, with 800 members.
- 4) The Vartabedaran of Siunik has given theologian var-tabeds and authors from the fifth century on. It was the see of Metropolitan of Siunik and was known also as the Ousoumnaran. Its outstanding representatives have been the historians Stepan Orbelian, Bedros Siu-netzi, Vrtanes Kertogh, Stepan Siunetzi, and the great

vartabed Hovhannes Vorodnetzi, the champion of the Armenian Church against the Unitors.

- 5) Thatev had 600 students during the sixth century, many of whom became philosophers, painters, musicians and writers. Gregor of Thatev and his pupils fought against the Catholic Unitors who were the missionaries of Rome.
- 6) Gamerch-Tzor, with a religious brotherhood of 600.
- 7) Narek has given Khostov Antzevatsi and Gregor Naregatzi, the great religious poet.
- 8) Varag in Vasbouragan.
- 9) Sanahin and Haghpad, with a congregation of 900. The Vank of Sanahin was built in 957 by the wife of Ashod the Merciful, Queen Khosrovanoush. At the beginning of the eleventh century, there was built adjacent to it the Academy of Grigor Magistros.
- 10) Kantzag, which produced the jurist Mechitar Kosh, whence the name Koshavank has been derived. Mechitar Kosh is famous for his book, "Tadasdanakirk", which is the first work of its kind (Law Book).
- 11) Kailatzor, or the University of Kailatzor, which was called a second Athens, had 360 vartabeds.
- 12) Among the yanks of Cilicia famous Romcla, Skevra, Garmir Vank, where Nerses Shnorhali and his brother were educated. The Vank of Trazarg, famous for Sarkis Bidsag, and Vank of Lampron, for Nerses Lambronatzi.
- 13) The University of Paghesh or Amrdol is famous for Vartan Vartabed and Patriarch Hovhannes Golod.
- 14) Achtamar, on an island in Lake Van.
- 15) The Vank of Sis, is Cilicia.
- 16) The Vank of Armash, the Tbrevank, and others.

THE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL OF ETCHMIADZIN

Began its new term in 1869. Catholicos Georg IV had its formal opening in 1874 with 60 students. But a fire des-

troyed part of it the same year, in October. It was rebuilt and was opened in 1875. Similar to Lazarian Jemaran of Moscow and the Jemaran of Scutari of Constantinople, it was called Jarankavoratz Hogeavor Jemaran “Soorp Kevorkian,” but the people called it “Georgian Jemaran.”

Georgian Jemaran was not a purely theological school and at first graduated no clergymen. When Ormanian was a teacher there, only one vartabed, K. Nahabedian was ordained. It was closed during the great Russian Revolution and so remained until 1945, when the Catholicos Georg VI reopened it naming it “Theological School” which is now the special object of the solicitude of the present Supreme Catholicos.

As for the JARANKAVORATZ SCHOOL OF JERUSALEM, it was established in 1843. However it has existed long before and has given writers of illuminated manuscripts, translators, who were taught “at the feet” of the vartabeds. In 1843, Patriarch Zakaria established it in Remleh and two years later transferred it to Jerusalem for the purpose of training members for the Brotherhood of the Holy Places. It was closed during World War I. Its second period began in 1921 at the time of Patriarch Elishe Tourian and with the aid of Archbishop Papken it gave as its first harvest in 1928-30, ten vartabeds.

Alas, out of nearly 1000 monasteries only a few have survived the ravages of the time, war and persecution. Those were centers of religious light and of culture which need to be excavated and their work subjected to critical study.

ARCHBISHOP SION MANOOGIAN

“The Armenian Church” November 1960

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ARMENIAN SEMINARIES

It is of tremendous significance to record that 1961 marked the establishment of the St. Nersess Armenian Theological School in Evanston, Illinois. This is the first Armenian Theological School in this hemisphere and will be opened to students this fall under the direction of the Dean, Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan. Through the generosity of Mrs. Satenig Ouzoonian of Los Angeles, California, and other benefactors, this momentous historic achievement has been made possible. Unquestionably, the school will serve as an inspirational focal point to our people in America and elsewhere. Primarily it will train future leaders of our church in this country. This Theological School is sponsored under the auspices and jurisdiction of Eastern and Western Dioceses of the Armenian Church in the United States.

The First Armenian Seminaries

Armenian seminaries, under the sponsorship of Monasteries, became centers of Armenian culture and spiritual life throughout the centuries. Scientists, poets, writers, theologians, philosophers, and other scholars are educated within the walls of seminaries. The Armenian world gained immeasurably from the contributions of personalities who were inspired as students in these seminaries.

St. Gregory the Enlightener was the founder of religious education in Armenia. With his genius for organization, he was instrumental in establishing Christianity as the State Religion of Armenia. During his aegis, the Armenian Church was organized with its hierarchal system. Under his guidance schools and monasteries were founded.

In the second half of the fourth century A.D., St. Nersess the Great established monasteries and schools all over Armenia for general education and for the preparation of monks and priests. Graduates of these schools became translators,

commentators, and spiritual leaders. St. Sahag and St. Mesrob received their education in these schools.

With the fifth century we have the beginning of the Golden Age of intellectual enlightenment in the Armenian Church. Under the brilliant scholarship and insight of St. Sahag and St. Mesrob, the Armenian Alphabet was evolved, and the Holy Bible and other classics were translated into Armenian. St. Sahag and St. Mesrob directed their efforts toward opening schools for secular and religious education. The schools of Sunik, especially, became the focal point for training clergy and for many centuries Sunik held a position of supremacy. Devout disciples of St. Sahag and St. Mesrob carried the torch of education into the sixth and seventh centuries. Through the efforts of Gomidas I. Catholicos (615-628), the School of Sunik continued as a potent force. Other seminaries were established in Armenia, most particularly at Arsharouni and Shirag. In these schools, students were educated under the tutelage of highly trained and experienced teachers. Many notable scholars were connected with these schools as students and as teachers.

During this period, Matoussagha, a gifted teacher and philosopher, became the superior of the School of Sunik. Anania of Shirag (Shiragatzi), a graduate of the school of Shirag, was an outstanding scientist and mathematician. For eight years, Anannia studied at Trebizond under Tuckyos, a renowned Byzantine astronomer. He wrote many books on weights and measures and the monetary system of his time. Parsegh John, superior of the School of Shirag, was especially known for his selection of hymns which were used in Church services.

Theological Education in the Dark Ages

From the 7th century to the beginning of the eleventh century, many famous seminaries were built. In addition to the schools of Sunik, Arsharouni and Shirag, great educational roles were played by the Schools of Aghtamar, Sevan,

Garmir Vank, Horomotz Vank, Nareg, Haghpad and Sanahin. Here Armenian scholars made valuable contributions in the field of history, theology, and science. Many of these seminaries flourished during this period with the encouragement of pious kings and queens of the Bagratid (885-1045). The Monastery of Nareg, from which St. Gregory (Naregatzi) was graduated, was among the most famous of this time. The writings of St. Gregory of Nareg reveal a vast knowledge of theological and biblical subjects. St. Gregory's masterpiece of writing is the "Prayer Book" (Aghotakirk) known as the "Nareg" and is considered to be the second Bible among pious Armenians. The superior of the Monastery of Nareg was St. Gregory's uncle Anania, who was the most erudite scholar of his day. Under his tutelage, St. Gregory was educated. Another great intellect of this time, Hovhannes Imasdaser (The Philosopher) Catholicos was revered for his scholarship and ability as a philosopher, theologian and orator.

It is noteworthy to stress the importance of two seminaries, Sanahin and Haghpad (Northern Armenia). Queen Khosrovanoosh, the wife of King Ashod III, the Merciful, was personally responsible for the building and program of those two seminaries. She devoted her life and energies to the high scholastic reputation which resulted from her devoted interest and consecrated efforts. Under her auspices, great scholars were brought here for the teaching of theology, oratory, philosophy, music, medicine and other sciences.

With the tragic disappearance of the Bagratid Dynasty, the Roupenian Dynasty came into prominence. European invaders and knights had introduced new concepts in religion and literature. The Cilician period (1080-1375 A.D.) had begun to accept a broader outlook than that of the previous oriental isolation.

During this Cilician period, several monastery schools were established. Significantly noteworthy are Garair Vank, Trazarg, Medskar, Usgevar, Agner, Mashgevan, and Kessoun. In the religio-political field, historical field, and scientific field, these schools produced famous scholars.

In the religio-political field, St. Nerses the Graceful (Shnorhali) was considered the pride of the Armenian Church. He was graduated from the School of Garmir Vank (The Red Cloister). Among the many prayers written by Nerses the Graceful is one composed of twenty-four verses in prose. The verses correspond to the twenty-four hours of the day and begin with “Havadov Khosdovanim” (Faithfully I confess). This prayer has been translated into thirty-six languages.

Others with great talent in the religio-political field are Bishop Ignatius, as commentator of the Gospel; Sarkis the Graceful, as commentator on the Seven Epistles; Nerses of Lampron, superior of the Seminary of Kessoon, in literature and oratory.

In the historical field, Matthew of Edessa is the most accurate source of certain information of political and ecclesiastical events of his time and area.

Another outstanding personality in the historical field is Stepanos Orpelian from the School of Sunik. His book, a “History of Sunik”, recorded the significant political and religious struggles in Armenia.

In the scientific field, the most outstanding person is Mekhitar Kosh, graduate of Sev Sar (Black Mt.) Vank. He is noted for his erudition as a teacher, preacher, and authority on law. His most important work is the “Law Book” (Tadas-danakirk), which is the first juridical treatise in the Armenian language. He is also well known for his delightful “Book of Fables”. He founded the Seminary of Kedig which produced many famous scholars.

The Rebirth of Seminaries in Eastern Armenia

During the 13th and 14th centuries under the auspices of the Khaghpakyan or Broshyan Princely House of Eastern Armenia, a new movement of education came into being. For five centuries this House encouraged the founding of several seminaries. Two major seminaries of the medieval “University” type are worthy of note.

The Seminary of Klatzor existed for only one century. It became a vital center for general education, and was known as the “Second Athens” and the “Capital of Wisdom”. Nerses of Daron (Daronatzi), superior of Klatzor, organized a militant movement at his school which vehemently and aggressively fought attempts to bring Latin influences into the Armenian Church.

Yessayie Netchetzi (1264-1338) was a pupil of Nerses of Daron and later the superior of the School of Klatzor, where he had over 300 students. This school attracted students from all over Armenia who came to learn theology, philosophy, oratory, grammar, and sacred music. Here manuscripts were carefully copied and beautifully illuminated. Two famous graduates of this school, Hovhannes of Vorod (Vorodnetzi) and Gregory of Datev (Krikor Datevatzi), ultimately became illustrious teachers in the School of Sunik in the Monastery of Datev. The School of Sunik, founded in the fifth century by St. Sahag and St. Mesrob, was a center of great intellectuality.

Hovhannes Vorodnetzi and Gregory of Datev (Datevatzi) revitalized a religious and patriotic movement at Sunik. As in the past, the School of Sunik was unique in its scholarship and reputation among all existing seminaries.

Gregory of Datev (1340-1420) represents in Armenia the peak of scholasticism of the Middle Ages. His first aim was to teach and interpret the scriptures of the Old and the New Testament. His second purpose was to teach philosophical works of Plato, Aristotle, Philo and others. His students were trained in logic and philosophy, and to search for truth aside from the Holy Scriptures. He wrote major works, the “Book of Questions” which is an authoritative religious encyclopedia, and the “Book of Sermons” which was a guide to the training of preachers and orators.

His scholarship included knowledge of Latin and through familiarity with the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus.

The Spiritual Institute of Datev granted a doctorate to only the most scholarly candidates who were qualified as teachers. To illustrate the high regard for the teaching profession in that time, when Gregory of Datev gave the Rank of Vartabed to Thomas Medsopetzi, he wrote to Arjishetzi: "I gave him authority and license to teach, to organize classes and to teach here the laws of God."

The essence of the philosophy of Datev continued at the Seminary of Amrdol (or Amlorti) which was founded in the 17th century. Bishop Daniel, the founder, had been educated in Datev. Many personalities carried on the philosophy of Datev, but the greatest erudite of this group was Parsegh. Under his influence, many graduates went out to establish monastery schools among the Armenian people. Hovhannes Golod, one of the graduates of Amrdol, later became Patriarch of Constantinople (1713). He counteracted the attempts of Roman Catholic propagandists by reinforcing the Armenian clergy with the intellectual weapons of the Latins. Hovhannes Golod transformed the educational activity in Constantinople by establishing a vital literary movement.

Modern Armenian Seminaries

The Seminary of Armash near Istanbul was in existence from the early part of the 17th century to the beginning of World War I. Particularly from 1889 it rendered a tremendous service in protecting the unity of the Armenian Church and also in preparing religious leaders for the enlightenment of the Armenian people. Patriarch Malachia Ormanian and Patriarch Yeghishe Tourian, men of great learning and scholarship in the true sense of the word, gave vigor and substance to Armash. Famous graduates of the Seminary were Catholicos Papken of Cilicia, Patriarch Torkom Kooshagian of Jerusalem, Patriarch Karekin Khachadourian of Constantinople. During the massacre of 1915, many scholars of Armash perished.

The Seminary of Etchmiadzin was originally erected in 1874, during the lifetime of Catholicos Kevork IV. It was then known as the Kevorkian Spiritual Academy with the Revolution of 1921, this Academy was closed for many years. In 1945, through the efforts of Catholicos Kevork VI, this Academy was reopened and renamed the Spiritual School of Etchmiadzin. Now, during the tenure of Vasken I, Catholicos of All Armenians, this school is flourishing. His guidance is greatly responsible for the advancement of the seminary. Gomidas Vartabed, Catholicos Karekin I of Cilicia are among many of the famous graduates of the Kevorkian Spiritual Academy.

The Seminary of St. James was established through the efforts of Patriarch Giragos (1841-1850). For many years the influence of this seminary was of varying degrees. However, from 1921 to 1940, the seminary of Jerusalem enjoyed great prominence under the revitalization of Patriarch Yeghishhe Tourian and later Patriarch Torkom Gooshagian who inspired the students and created a reputation which made these years the "Golden Age" for the seminary. Since the end of World War II, this seminary has been functioning actively.

The Seminary of the Catholicate of Cilicia in Antelias was founded in 1930, during the tenure of Catholicos Sahag Khabaian. After 1914-1918, Armenians were evacuated from Cilicia as a result of the Turkish deportations and massacres. The Catholicate of Sis was established in Antelias, a town seven miles North of Beirut. Catholicos Sahag Khabaian arranged for the purchase of land and buildings with the help of American Near East Foundation. This property was then converted to a seminary and officially dedicated in 1930. Since then, Catholicos Papken Gulesserian, Bedros Sarajian, Karekin Hovsepianz and other scholars have contributed vitally to the enrichment and reputation of this seminary.

The Holy Cross Seminary of Uskudar, in Istanbul, was established in 1954 under the auspices and zealous efforts of Patriarch Karekin Khachadourian, a great scholar who died last year. This seminary is actively training future spiritual

leaders of the Armenian Church and will undoubtedly play an important role in time to come.

Although briefly presented, the history of Armenian seminaries is dramatic and of extraordinary significance. The mission of seminaries is endless. Now, with the advent of the St. Nersess Armenian Theological School in Evanston, Illinois, another chapter is about to be written. Its potentialities are immeasurable in terms of service and accomplishment. This school offers a golden opportunity to our young people of this country to identify themselves in an active sense. Service to God is ultimate. To carry the torch of the teaching of Christ is infinite in magnitude. We can now envision a rebirth of the "Golden Age" of spirituality and intellectuality in our Church.

VERY REV. YEGHISHE GIZIRIAN
"The Armenian Guardian" May 1952

WHY SAY “AMEN”

St. Augustine of Hippo, he who wrote the Confessions, is said to have remarked that no one has ventured to translate such Hebrew words as Amen and Alleluiah into any other language. Even the name of Jesus had reached us in its Greek form, not in the Hebrew Joshua. Christians have not only preserved the Hebrew Amen but seem also to have kept closely to its ancient meaning. From the days of Moses Amen (so be it) had been employed as the word by which the people acknowledged their responsibility, especially in the keeping of the laws of their God and of their community. A vivid example of this will be found in Deuteronomy 27 (please get out your Bibles and look up this chapter and read it). The people were commanded to answer Amen after each pronouncement of malediction.

Later it became customary for people to say Amen after the public benediction in the synagogue. For the first Christians in Jerusalem, brought up in Jewish tradition, it must have been quite instinctive to say Amen after the words consecrating the Bread and Wine. St. Paul's I Corinthians 14:8-16 shows how important it was for him who prayed publicly to use language understood by all so they could answer Amen at the end. Down through the centuries, congregations have been given an opportunity to participate in public prayers. They give their assent by saying Amen (so be it). This should be an audible assent, not a half-hearted murmur. Many Christians today are quite indifferent to saying Amen at the end of prayers.

“The Armenian Guardian” February 1962

A BRIEF COMMENTARY ON THE DIVINE LITURGY

1. ON THE WORDS ‘LITURGY’ AND ‘PATARAG’

Liturgy means ‘service’ is Greek. The Divine Liturgy is the service to God. A Christian partaking in the Divine Liturgy is, in the most proper sense of the phrase, “at God’s service”.

The Armenian word used to designate the Divine Liturgy is Sourb Patarag, which means ‘Holy Sacrifice’. Etymologically, ‘patarag’ means ‘offering’, ‘oblation’, ‘gift’. It is derived from the noun of the Zend verb paytiragayam, meaning ‘I offer’, ‘I give’, ‘I present’.

2. ON THE ESSENCE OF THE DIVINE LITURGY

Jesus Christ, while He walked about in this world to do His work, acted through His earthly body, which He took from our human nature.

After the Ascension and the Pentecost, when the Church received the Holy Spirit in the Upper Room, Christ continued His work and acted through His mystical body, the Church, and He shall so act henceforth for ever.

Thus the Church has the same function in the world as the human body of Christ had when He lived on this earth. When the Church offers the bread and the wine in the Divine Liturgy through the priest, the latter acts as the representative of the Church, and consequently as the functionary of Christ Himself. The Gifts, that is the bread and the wine, represent and become the figures, “the mysteries”, both of the body with which Christ walked about in this world and also of the Church, His mystical body, in which Christ continues to work in the world.

Thus the offering made by the priest becomes an unbloody immolation parallel with that of Christ on Calvary. When God the Father receives this offering on His heavenly altar, He imparts His Spirit to this offering and makes it a

living body, just as He made the body of Christ living at the Resurrection and made the Church living at Pentecost.

By communicating with this mystical body and blood of Christ, a Christian becomes incorporated in the living Body of Christ and becomes himself living spiritually and capable of rising in and with Christ.

The Holy Sacrifice, then, is the extension into the temporal order of the One Eternal Sacrifice in heaven, in the way in which that eternal sacrifice was manifested on this earth by Christ.

The ritual of the Holy Sacrifice or the Divine Liturgy is, then, the visible, sacramental counterpart of that spiritual offering which Christians must make of their souls to the Creator and heavenly Father, together with and in the offering of Christ Himself.

Such a spiritual offering of the soul in Christ, made through the mystical act of the Holy Sacrifice, is the necessary way of gaining the life of eternity for the soul.

3. ON THE VARIOUS PARTS OF THE DIVINE LITURGY

The Divine Liturgy is composed of four distinct parts of varying importance and origin. These are: The Preparation; The Synaxis; The Sacrifice; The Last Blessing.

The third part, the Holy Sacrifice proper, constitutes the essential act of the Divine Liturgy and is also called the Eucharist and sometimes the Anaphora.

a) The Preparation consists of certain acts and prayers for the ritual and consequently moral purification of the celebrant priest as well as the participating faithful, in preparation for the performance of the mystery of the Holy Sacrifice.

The first theme of the Preparation is the assumption by the priest of his sacerdotal function by the Vesting.

The second and third themes of the Preparation consist of acts and prayers for repentance and divine forgiveness, which make the priest and the believer bold to enter into the presence of God in a mystical way.

The fourth theme is the preparation of the elements of the Holy Sacrifice, i.e., the bread and the wine, symbolizing the preparation of Christ for His redemptive work before His Baptism.

b) The Second Part of the Divine Liturgy is the Synaxis or the Service of the Midday Meal.

Synaxis, which is a Greek word, means meeting, and it refers to a general prayer meeting, which used to be held prior to the Eucharist, or the Holy Sacrifice proper, in the early centuries of the Christian era. The Synaxis was held for the purpose of Christian edification. The Armenian name for the Synaxis probably refers to the fact that this part of the Divine Liturgy was held in connection with the love-feast (agape) of the primitive church.

Synaxis may be performed in the Armenian Church also as a separate service and is the fourth of the seven hours or services of the Armenian Breviary of Book of Hours (Zhamagirk), assigned for noon time. These seven hours or services are: 1. The Night Service; 2. The Morning Service; 3. The Sunrise Service; 4. The Midday Service; 5. The Evening Service; 6. The Peace Service; 7. The Rest Service.

The first theme of the Synaxis is the proclamation of God's Kingdom in the Church, the citizenship of the faithful in it and the affinity of the Kingdom on earth with that of heaven.

The second theme of the Synaxis (Lections, Creed, Prayers) refers to the enlightenment of the mind of man called to enter into God's Kingdom, and to the understanding of divine truths and of the will of God. This is followed by the proclamation of and witness to the Christian faith by the enlightened believer. In this part of the Synaxis the teaching ministry of the Church is symbolized and the reception of the Gospel or the good news by mankind is sacramentalized.

c) After moral purification and mental illumination, the third and the main part of the Liturgy, the Holy Sacrifice proper, effects the spiritual and mystical union of the Christian with his Lord and God, Jesus Christ.

The believer first offers himself through the Church, which is the Body of Christ, to God. Then he is accepted, united and exalted together with Christ. And then this spiritual process is actualized through the communion, wherewith the communicant renews and develops his membership of the body of Christ and dwells in Christ, being thereby also indwelt by Christ.

This essential union of the Christian with the Lord constitutes the core of the Sacrament or Mystery of the Eucharist and is the ultimate purpose of Christian life as a whole.

It is this third part of the Divine Liturgy which constitutes the Sacrament which was instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself at His last supper with the Apostles, and which was performed by the Lord in person on Calvary.

These three acts, represented by the three parts of the Divine Liturgy, i.e., Purification, Illumination and Unification, are also the three stages of the process of perfection of the spiritual life of a Christian, as he travels on his way to God.

d) The fourth part of the Divine Liturgy, i.e., the Last Blessing and Dismissal, is only an appendage and an elaborate send-off after the termination of the Sacrament.

4. THE ORIGIN OF THE FORM OF THE DIVINE LITURGY

The origin of the Divine Liturgy or the Eucharist goes back to an old Jewish religious fraternal meal, called Chabourah. What is known as the Last Supper, which the Lord Jesus Christ had with the inner circle of his followers, was therefore a Chabourah, which means ‘love’ or ‘fellowship’ in Hebrew.

At a chabourah or khabourah the leader of the fraternity would first take bread and break it, saying a short prayer. This bread would then be distributed among the brothers seated. After this initial ceremony, the food would be served, each food being blessed in turn before being consumed. The wine would be blessed by each person as he drank during the meal. At the end of the meal would come the washing of hands.

After this the “grace” would be said by the leader of the fraternity. This “grace” was “the blessing” said over a cup of wine, called “the cup of blessing”. After the blessing the leader would pass it on to the others, who would do likewise. Thereupon a psalm would be sung and the dismissal would be pronounced.

A chabourah could not be held as a rule by less than three persons. The breaking of the bread and the blessing of the cup, at the beginning of the meal and at the end respectively, was the proper function of the president of the fraternal group.

At the Last Supper Christ presided over such a corporate solemn meal, of which the first and last parts were joined together to form the Eucharist. Christ filled the old ceremonial pietistic form with a new content and transformed it into the mystery of the sacrifice of His Body and Blood. After blessing the bread and the wine He proclaimed them to be His Body and Blood, broken and shed for men, for the expiation of their sins.

5. ON THE ORIGIN OF THE DIFFERENT RITES OF THE LITURGY

The order of the Liturgy in the second century was as follows:

Lections; Sermon; Prayers; Kiss of Peace; Offertory; Prayers and Thanksgiving with Amen; Communion.

Thus at the beginning of the third century a certain uniformity of plan for the Liturgy was already established. This uniformity, however, was in no way rigid. Bishops were still at liberty to improvise their own Eucharistic prayers on the recognized pattern. As a consequence of this fact, various texts of the Eucharistic prayer of a standard form were eventually evolved. Each great ecclesiastical center gradually established its own text of the Liturgy, owing to the authority and influence which these centers exercised over the churches in their part of the world. The best of these texts had great names of church fathers attached to each of them. Thus the Liturgy

of St. Mark in Egypt, the Liturgy of St. James in Palestine, and others were recognized.

In this connection Hyppolitus (c. 217) writes: "It is not altogether necessary for him (i.e., the bishop) to recite the same words as we gave before in this Thanksgiving to God, as though he had learnt to say them by heart; but let each one pray according to his ability. If indeed he is able to pray suitably a prayer of elevated style, that is well; but if he is only able to pray according to a fixed form, no one may prevent him to do so, so long as his prayer is doctrinally sound."

It was thus that the establishment of national and regional rites gaining ascendance produced the fixity of texts. This process began and gained impetus in the fourth century.

Later, the development of the liturgical calendars at the end of the fourth century, and, together with this, the desire to introduce variety in the Liturgy in accordance with the significance of different feasts, created the Variables in the Liturgy.

6. ON THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARMENIAN RITE OF THE LITURGY

There are five Armenian texts of the Liturgy now extant. These were probably texts evolved in different centers in Armenia, or in centers to the west and south of it. One of these five texts has later dominated the others and eventually put them out of use in the course of the fifth and following centuries.

Of these five Armenian Liturgies one was that of St. Basil of Caesarea. We have evidence from the first half of the fifth century that the Liturgy of St. Basil, as it was known and used in the great metropolis of Caesarea, was in common use in Armenia.[†] We now have the text of this Liturgy, which can be called Caesarean Basil, because it is considerably different from the Liturgy known in the Greek Church as the

[†] See Feustus of Byzantium, Book V, Chapter 28.

Liturgy of St. Basil, which was subjected to changes much later than the time of St. Basil. This later form of St. Basil's Liturgy could conveniently be called Byzantine Basil.

Besides the Caesarean Basil four other liturgies were used in the Armenian Church during and after the fifth century. These were probably all translations from Greek texts, which are now presumably lost. One of these four liturgies is the most complete. This is the one which, after undergoing certain modifications and changes, mainly consisting of additional hymns and litanies, has been in general use in the Armenian Church since the tenth century at the latest.

Although there are references to this Liturgy in the literature of the seventh and ninth centuries, the earliest complete text which we have does not go beyond the middle of the tenth century. Its language and its intrinsic evidence give us assurance to affirm that it was translated, and consequently used, in the fifth century.

Some of the features of the Armenian Liturgy reflect what is called the Jerusalem rites. This is due to the fact that in the fifth century, after 397 but before 431, the Jerusalem rite of the Liturgy of St. James was adopted by the church of Antioch, with which the Armenian Church has always been in close contact.

The few changes made in the Armenian Liturgy after the middle of the tenth century are almost all in the direction of the Byzantine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, which has been the most widely used liturgy in the Greek Orthodox Church. There are also in the Armenian Liturgy some minor indications of the influence of the Roman Liturgy, as a result of the contacts which Armenians had with the Crusaders.

The Armenian Liturgy, which is now used, took its final form and became the dominant Liturgy of the Armenian Church sometime after the year 950 but before 1177, which is the date when Nerses of Lambron wrote his commentary on the Liturgy. The first printing of it in 1706 gave fixity to its minutest details.

7. ON THE HISTORY OF THE SYNAXIS

The earliest text of the Armenian Liturgy (950 A.D.) does not contain the Preparation and the Synaxis. The first of these two parts of the Liturgy was in all probability introduced sometime after 950 but before 1177, being borrowed mainly from the Greek Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.

As to the Synaxis, owing apparently to the fact that it was used also as a separate service, being one of the seven daily offices, it was not customarily joined to the text of the Liturgy proper, which did not form part of the Breviary or the Book of Hours.

It is certain, however, that the service of the Syntax always preceded the performance of the Eucharist. Khosrov of Anzev begins his commentary on the Liturgy (950 A.D.) with these words: "After the Gospel and the Creed, the deacon shall proclaim", then quoting the Litany of the Great Entrance, continues from then on.

This joining of the Synaxis to the Eucharist was already normal in the ancient Church as early as the second century.

The Synaxis or the "Jashou Service" (= 'The Midday-Meal Service') is similar to the service of the Synagogue in the time of our Lord. It was the public service of the ancient Christians. It was open to the faithful and to the catechumens alike, whereas the Eucharist was restricted exclusively to the faithful.

The form of the Synaxis, as we have it now, was practically fixed in the fourth century, its main features being: psalmody, lections, sermon and a number of prayers.

Originally the Synaxis, in the above form, was used in the Churches (e.g. in Edessa until the fifth century) as a distinct service by itself, as it is still used in the Armenian Church. It has certain similarities with the Greek service of the Typica, which also corresponds to the Synaxis of the Greek Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.

The Armenian designation of the Synaxis as “The Meal Service” suggests its affinity to “the Agape”, or “the Lord’s Supper”, of which the prototype was the middle part of the Jewish corporate ceremonial meal of the Chabourah (see above). It was in the second century that the middle part of the Chabourah was separated from its beginning and its end, which were conjoined to form the Eucharist proper.

‘Matal’ in the Armenian Church is a communal meal prepared by one who has made a vow and has had his wish granted, or by one who has been saved from a grave danger. This meal is blessed and is then distributed to the congregation after the Liturgy. Some of the details of the observance of ‘matal’ correspond to the description of “the Agape” by Hyppolitus (beginning of the third century). This might be considered to indicate that ‘matal’ is a survival of the Agape.

John of Ozoun (717- +728) knew the Armenian Synaxis (“Service of the Meal”) practically as we have it at present, and has left us a description of it in its entirety. This shows that the Synaxis has not undergone any considerable change at least since the beginning of the eight century.

THE PREPARATION

8. ON THE VESTING OF THE PRIEST

Vesting is performed in the Vestry privately, indicative of the fact that the assumption of a sacred function by a sinful man, representing the people in the church, is a mystery. The priest covers his sinful individuality and performs the Liturgy as the functionary of Christ, clad in glorious vestments befitting the children of light and the royal presence of the Lord.

While the priest is vested, the faithful should be mindful of their privileges as Christians and the children of light in the church, and they should pray God to vest them with the glorious spiritual garments of Christian virtues.

During the first three centuries no distinctive liturgical or sacerdotal dresses were used in the church. When, however, the

civic dress of the period changed its form in the course of the following centuries, the clergy continued to preserve the old forms. Consequently these forms acquired the character of liturgical or sacerdotal dress.

In the course of the fourth and fifth centuries liturgical garments developed into rich robes and “splendid raiment”. This development however took place despite considerable opposition by more conservative authorities and austere bishops.

9. ON THE PURIFICATION

By the ceremony and prayers of purification the occasion of Incarnation and of the Coming of Christ into this world is sacramentalized. The occasion or cause of the incarnation was the sinfulness of man and the consequent necessity of repentance.

The washing of the hands by the priest effects ritual purity and signifies the necessity of purifying the soul of all uncleanness before approaching the saving mystery of the sacred Liturgy. The act is symbolic and not utilitarian. (Deacons handling the chalice and the unconsecrated gifts do not rinse their hands.)

During the Purification the faithful should be mindful of their sinfulness and should pray for the remittance of their sins.

The ablution of hands at the beginning of the Liturgy is first mentioned in 348 as being performed in Jerusalem.

The second part of the Purification (Confession and Forgiveness) was introduced in the Armenian Liturgy in the 13th century and was taken from the Latin rite. The first part appears towards the end of the 14th century.

10. ON THE ACCESSION

In accession the priest enters into divine presence to perform his duty, which begins with the preparation of the elements of the divine mystery.

While Vesting and Purification were the necessary preparations to qualify the priest personally for the performance

of the mystery, in accession he enters upon his function, glorifying God with gladness and with humility of heart and mind.

During Accession the faithful should be mindful of God's presence, and of His readiness to receive them as His children when they approach him with humble and joyful confidence.

The first part of the Accession, from the First Psalm of Entrance to the Prayer in the Sanctuary, inclusive, has been added to the first part of the Armenian Liturgy after the twelfth century. Some manuscripts of as late as the middle of the seventeenth century do not contain these items.

11. ON THE PROTHESIS

In the Prothesis the priest does two things. First, he receives in the name of God the offerings of the faithful, which consist of bread and wine brought to him by the deacon and then he sets them on the Table of Prothesis, presenting them to God the Father in remembrance of the offering by Christ of His Body and Blood during His passion on Calvary.

The Veil is drawn during the Prothesis indicating that Christ took flesh from the Virgin under the veil of the mystery of the Incarnation. He made that flesh His body and gave it to the world as life-giving food. In the same manner the Church, which is the mystical Body of Christ, offers herself in the bread and wine to the Father, who will presently take them and make them Christ's body and blood through the Holy Spirit, so that they who partake of them shall be renewed and shall have immortal life.

As Christ assumed actual flesh when he was born in the Old Israel and offered His body as bloody sacrifice, so now in the New Israel, which is the Church, he assumes mystical flesh and offers it to the Father as an unbloody sacrifice. Thus Christ offers the Church in Himself to the Father in heaven, as also the Church offers Christ to the Father, inasmuch as the church is the living body of Christ.

The Prothesis, therefore, in some sense preconsecrates the bread and the wine, making them the figures or the representations of the Body and Blood of Christ before His Resurrection.

During the Prothesis the faithful should renew and deepen their sense of dedication to God. They should make an act of submission to the will of God and should commit themselves into the hand of God. They should pray God to accept their offering, both material and spiritual, and make them worthy of His divine mercy.

In the early church the general custom was to bring the oblations of bread and wine to the sacristy or to lay them on a special table in the church, before the beginning of the service, i.e., before the Synaxis. This bringing-in of the gifts developed to be a part of the liturgical rite, and took the form of what we now know as the Prothesis, during the period between the tenth and twelfth centuries.

The words of Annunciation, used at the end of the Prothesis come from the Liturgy of St. James.

Unleavened bread and unmixed wine are used in the Armenian Liturgy. We have proof that at least from the fifth century onwards the bread of the Eucharist was unleavened in Armenia. The Syrians had the same custom of using unleavened bread, but they changed to leavened bread in the seventh century, when they became 'corruptionists' (those who hold that the physical body of Christ was corruptible). The Armenians persisted in their ancient custom, as their sympathies generally were with the 'uncorruptionists'.

The Roman Church began to use unleavened bread after the ninth century. There is no evidence that they used unleavened bread before that date.

According to the canons of the Apostolic Constitutions (No. 33 in Armenian Canon Law), the bread of the Eucharist must be baked on the day on which it is taken to the altar. This is still the general practice in the Armenian Church.

The items following the Prayer of the Prothesis have been added to the Armenian Liturgy towards the end of the 13th century.

THE SYNAXIS

12. ON THE CENSING

Incense is an “offering” for atonement of sins. The evening messedî (equivalent of the tract in the Roman Church) refers to the incense as “an oblation of the evening”. Its sweet-smelling smoke going up, symbolizes acceptable prayer.

Censing is also an honorific act, when performed before pictures of saints, before the altar or before the dignitaries of the Church.

The coming of the priest down into the congregation and walking among them in procession signifies the period of the teaching ministry of Christ, when He came down from heaven, and doing honor to the human nature, assumed manhood, motivated by God’s love for man.

As the incense, which is offered to God, burns in the censor and sends up its fragrance, so also the Christian soul, burning with the love of God, and dedicating itself to the Almighty, should send its ardent prayers to the heavenly Father, in order to receive the spiritual gifts and the graces of the Holy Spirit from on high.

The use of torches and incense before the bishop carrying the Gospels-book, has its origin in the custom of civil magistrates, who used to be preceded by torches and incense when formally entering the court, holding their “book of mandates”. From the bishop the custom was later passed on to priests. For the use of torches see also psalms 119 and 105.

After being used as an act of honor before bishops and before shrines in the fourth century, censing became an established part of the liturgical service in the course of the fifth and sixth centuries. It was introduced into the Liturgy by churches lying east of the territories covered by the Greek

or Byzantine Church, under the influence of the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius, named the Aeropagite (c. 485).

St. Ephraem, the great Syrian church father, provided in his testament that incense should not be used at his funeral (+373), because he said he was unworthy of it.

The Prayer of Incense and the Prayer of the Prothesis of the Armenian Liturgy are the same as those of the Liturgy which we have called the Caesarean Basil.

13. ON THE ENARXIS

Enarxis is the beginning of the Synaxis, and its central theme is that Christians in assembly, coming together in the name of Christ, constitute and form one body in the fullness of the Church, which is the depository of divine truth.

The Blessing of the Enarxis proclaims the fact that the Church is the Kingdom of God. It makes us recall the Baptism of Christ, during which The Blessed Trinity was revealed and glorified and which marked the beginning of the ministry of our Lord and of the Kingdom.

The Monogenes, together with the Introit, point to the facts which inaugurated God's Kingdom.

During the Enarxis the members of the congregation should endeavor to realize that they are subjects in God's Kingdom, and members of the Body of Christ; that they are united in one sacred purpose, which is the service of God; that they are to learn the laws of the Kingdom through the Church and that their minds will be enlightened with the Word of God, proclaimed and taught through the Church.

The Monogenes, which is now only recited in the Armenian Liturgy instead of being sung, as in the Byzantine Liturgy, was written and introduced in the Eucharist by the Emperor Justinian in the year 535.

The Introit was originally an appropriate psalm sung antiphonally before the Lesser Entrance in all Liturgies. In the middle of the fourth century non-scriptural antiphons were introduced and began to be sung together with the psalm.

The Armenian Synaxis has preserved the original use of the Antiphonal Psalms (= the Responsory of Jashou) until the 15th century. Originally it was sung; but now it is simply intoned alternately verse by verse and is followed by a prose chant called Jashou (=dinner-time) Chant or Hymn. This chant follows the Introit, which is sung or intoned solo by a clerk. Most of the introits of the Armenian Synaxis are non-scriptural. They usually make reference to the events of the feasts being celebrated or to the salient facts of the lives of Saints being commemorated.

The singing of Gloria patri or the Doxology, together with the Antiphonal Psalm or the Introit, began also in the fourth century in Antioch. In the Armenian Synaxis Gloria patri is sung before the last verse of the Jashou Chant or Hymn. It is, moreover, a regular custom in the Armenian services to sing Gloria patri before the last verse of all prose chants.

The Antiphon (Ktzourd) is the verse of a psalm which indicates its theme. Originally the antiphon of a psalm was sung by the congregation as a refrain to the other verses of it, which were sung solo by a deacon or a clerk.

The three antiphons of the Enarxis have now disappeared in the Armenian Liturgy, although the three prayers following these antiphons remain. The Responsory of Jashou, which is the antiphon of the psalm intoned before the Jashou chant, has taken the place of the second antiphon.

The rubrics of a Greek service of the Typica of the ninth century say that when there is a litany during the Synaxis, no antiphons are sung. It is probable that the Great Litany of the Synaxis in the Armenian Liturgy has been the cause of the exclusion of the antiphons.

The prayers of the antiphons are those found in the Liturgy of St. Chrysostom. They were introduced in the Armenian Liturgy some time between the tenth and the twelfth centuries.

14. ON THE LESSER ENTRANCE

After the emphasis on the solidarity of members of the church in the Kingdom of God, the point is made in the Lesser entrance that the faithful are solidary also with the angels. Together with the angels, men are spiritual beings, which is shown by the fact that they are adorned with all the graces of God. Consequently, men have been given the right to approach and to enter into the presence of the heavenly light of truth revealed in the Word of God. Prayers are said asking God to make the faithful worthy of the reception of the Word, by cleansing their souls and their minds.

The Trisagion, which is addressed to the Second Person of the Trinity, is a glorification of the Word of God, and the elevation of the Gospels-book is the sacramentalization of this glorification.

The Litany enumerated the various orders of the faithful in the Church, for which prayers are said.

During the Lesser Entrance the faithful should meditate on the glory and the holiness of the heavenly light, which will dawn upon their soul through the Word of God, speaking in the Holy Gospels. Inwardly they should approach Christ in order to receive the eternal truths into their minds and souls, cleansed of sins and made ready by penitence.

The Lesser Entrance originally marked the beginning of the Liturgy. Later, when the Prothesis and the Enarxis were added, the Lesser Entrance was transformed into a solemn elevation of the Gospel.

The Hymn of the Trisagion was introduced into the Liturgy in Constantinople sometime between the years 434 and 446. Later, in 471, the Patriarch of Antioch, named Peter the Fuller, added to it the phrase: "who was crucified for us", in order to emphasize the orthodox teaching that the Second Person of the Holy Trinity suffered on the Cross.

The Great Litany of the Synaxis is mentioned in its present form by John of Osoun (717- +728).

15. ON THE LECTIONS

The Lections from the Old and the New Testaments have been appointed by the Church according to the proper of each day, in conformity with the annual cycle of feasts set out in the Calendar-Book. So each Lection has some direct or indirect bearing on the significance of the day in the annual cycle, which covers all the salient important points of the Christian message, proclaimed by the Old and the New Testaments.

The Gradual (Jashou psalm), the Tract (Messedi) and the Alleluia, preceding the Prophet, the Apostle and the Gospel respectively, are verses from the Psalms having some bearing on the main theme of the lection or lections following them.

The Prophet, besides containing a reading from one of the prophets of the Old Testament, contains also readings from the other books of the Old Testament. Similarly, the Apostle may have one or more readings from the writings of the Apostles in the New Testament. But the Gospel is always a single reading from any of the four evangelists.

The faithful should listen attentively to the readings from the Holy Scriptures, trying to understand them with a non-critical attitude of mind. They should consider the message contained in the passages read as being directly addressed to them. They should never consider themselves as being the judges on the merit of what is being read, but should rather regard themselves as being judged by the divine pronouncements contained in the readings, or by the implications of the events related in the passages read. The time of the Divine Liturgy is not the time for a scholarly study of the Scriptures; it is rather the time for a humble and devout attitude of passivity in order to receive light from on high through God's Word.

The selection and arrangement of lessons in the Calendar-Book is not the work of a single person on a definite date. The annual cycle of the lessons have been fixed by a process of development along the development of the liturgical year.

The reference to the “steps” in the rubrics of the Divine Liturgy recalls the custom in the primitive church, according to which the choir men used to stand on the steps leading to the bishop’s throne and chant the psalms in between the lessons. “The Gradual” (the Jashou psalm) from the Latin gradus, meaning a “step”, is the oldest chant of the Liturgy.

Later, until after the 12th century in Armenia, only the celebrant Priest, or priests assisting the celebrant Bishop, used to sit on the steps around the Apse during the reading of the first two of the three Lessons. After the 12th century, when the custom of having steps around the Apse was discontinued, the celebrant Priest used to sit on the chair placed on the north side of the Apse facing south.

The celebrant Bishop has always had his throne on the south side of the Apse, where he sat during the reading of the first two Lessons and during the Sermon, facing west. At present, however, as the celebrant Priest does not sit any more in a chair, the celebrant Bishop’s chair is placed on the north side of the Apse.

Messedi, which corresponds to the Tract of the Roman Liturgy, is “the middle psalm” (from the Greek word mesedion) which is sung or recited in between the gradual and the Alleluia.

The changing of the Alleluia has its origin in the custom of the Synagogue, where psalms were sung in between the lessons. In older manuals of the Armenian Liturgy, the Alleluia is written in elaborate music to be sung by a soloist.

Justin Martyr, writing in 145, says that lessons from the writings of the Apostles and the Prophets were read during the Synaxis. In the reference to “the writings of the Apostles” the Gospels also must naturally be implied. Towards the end of the fourth century the custom of reading three lessons during the Synaxis (from the Old Testament, from the Epistles of the Apostles and from the Gospels) was universally established as a normal rule. In the Roman and the

Greek churches reading from the Old Testament was discontinued in the late fifth century.

The Lessons are chanted instead of being read in the common way, because chanting gives solemnity and distinctness to the diction. The custom was known in the Jewish Synagogue, and from there it seems to have passed to the Christian Church since the second century. The informal speaking voice is an innovation introduced by the Roman Church in the Middle Ages.

The Sermon originally was, (and it usually should be), a commentary on what has been read in the lessons.

Since the earliest times (145 A.D.) the place of the sermon has been after the lections. In the Armenian Church the sermon is usually preached between the Apostle and the Gospel during the Lections.

The sermon preached during the Synaxis was essentially an exposition of the corporate witness of the Church to the faith. Therefore, only the bishop was entitled to expand the faith of the Church. That is why the bishop sits upon his throne, as upon his “teacher’s chair”, when preaching. Thus, in ancient times priests did not have the authority to preach during the Liturgy. In the third century it was considered a scandal if a priest preached at the Synaxis.

In the Armenian Church canonically priests still do not have authority to preach. They can only give “exhortations”. From the fifth century onwards monastic priests began to receive authority to teach in the Church. In the fourteenth century an “order of teachers” was established, and doctoral authority was formally conferred on qualified monastic priests, who received by means of prescribed rites performed by the bishop, the charisma of teaching in the Church.

16. ON THE CREED

The Creed is the proclamation of the essentials of the Christian faith of which the Church is the depository.

The Creed is recited after the Lections in the Synaxis in order to put the minds of the faithful right on the truths contained in the Scriptures. They are guided in their life, as members of the Church, by these truths.

The faithful, joining in the recitation of the Creed, should renew their act of faith in the teaching of the Church, humbly submitting themselves to the requirements of that faith, with all its implications. They should also endeavor to renew and strengthen their resolve to act upon that faith with an enlightened mind.

St. Irenaeus (+ 202) says: “having received the office of the proclamation of the faith, the Church, though she be spread abroad over all the earth, diligently observes them (i.e., the rules of the faith) as dwelling in the single household, and unanimously believes these things as having one soul and the same heart ... And as among those who preside over the churches (i.e., the bishops), he who is skilled in teaching says nothing else than this – so he who is but a poor teacher yet does not omit the contents of the tradition.”

The Creed was placed in the Divine Liturgy in 473 by the Patriarch of Antioch, Peter, named “the Fuller”, as a demonstration against the Council of Chalcedon, of which the distinctive formula had no place in the Creed. From Antioch, the custom of reciting the Creed during the Liturgy, spread everywhere in Christendom. In Constantinople the custom was adopted in 511, and in the West, in 589.

In the Liturgy known to Pseudo-Dionysius (c. 485), also in that known to Narsai (late fifth century), the Creed follows the reading of the Gospel lesson. It has had the same place in the Armenian Liturgy since the fifth century.

The Doxology after the Creed appears in the Armenian Synaxis in the 13th century. The attribution of this item to St. Gregory the Enlightener began in the 15th century.

17. ON THE PRAYER AFTER THE LECTIONS

The Prayers after the Lections are the concluding prayers of the Synaxis. The first of these two prayers refers to the sufferings of Christ, implying that the faithful have to endure sufferings in the world, in order to remain steadfast in the faith. Then the gifts of the Holy Spirit are requested in order to strengthen the faithful in the struggle against the world. The second prayer is a request for peace. The themes of both these prayers are themes for prayers of dismissal.

While the Litany and the Prayers after the Lections are said, the faithful should compose themselves and feel prepared for the great mystery of the Eucharist.

The Council of Laodicea (fourth century) ordered three prayers for the faithful before the Kiss of Peace, the first being silent and the second and the third aloud. The Armenian Liturgy has only two, the first silent and the second aloud.

The Prayers after the Lections were originally called the Prayers after the Sermon in St. Mark's Liturgy, which was that of the Egyptian tradition. These prayers were later left out of St. Mark's Liturgy. The origin of the Armenian prayers is not clear, as they do not resemble the Prayers of the Faithful, quoted by St. Serapion (middle of fourth century). It is probable that when the main theme of the Prayers of the Faithful was transferred into the Anaphora and was placed after the Epiclesis, the Prayers lost their meaning and were dropped out, and the prayers which we now have took their place, as being appropriate for the conclusion of the Synaxis.

The transference of the General Intercessions, which originally were contained in the Prayers of the Faithful, into the Anaphora took place in the fourth century,

In the 10th century the Sermon was delivered at this point, at the end of the Synaxis, according to Khosrov of Anzev (950 A.D.).

THE HOLY SACRIFICE

18. ON THE NATURE OF THE HOLY SACRIFICE

The Eucharist or “the Holy Sacrifice”, as it is called by the Armenian and other Eastern Churches, is “the showing of the Lord’s death” (1 Cor. 11:26). It is communion with Jesus as with a friend, and with Christ the Son as with God. It is the true manna which sustains a Christian’s life. It is the foretaste of the eternal banquet of heaven (Luke 22:3). It foreshadows the second coming of Christ. In it Christ comes down to live with His worshippers. It is the vehicle of the Holy Spirit, inasmuch as we receive the Holy Spirit through it (1 Cor. 12: 13). It is the means to eternal life (John 6:53-4). It is the bond of unity in the Church (1 Cor. 10:17). It is an act of the Church by which Christians dedicate themselves to the Lord, and become aware of His special presence in their midst, in accordance with His words: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matt. 18:20). In the Holy Sacrifice the Church acts “in remembrance of Him”. The Church acts upon Christ’s mandate not merely by the renewing of an old memory, but by joining in the fullness of the action which Christ performed by offering Himself as a sacrifice to God the Father for us (Eph. 5:2). The Church does this by token of the fact that she is the Body of Christ. As the Body and Blood of Christ offered once and for all on Calvary is eternal sacrifice, offered and accepted perpetually on the altar in heaven, so the Church realizes and actualizes that eternal spiritual sacrifice here on earth continually.

So the offering of the Church in the Eucharist is an act closely bound with that of Christ in heaven. The Church “always bears in the body the death of the Lord Jesus, so that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in on body.” (2 Cor. 9:10).

The words of institution (Matt. 26:26-28) are recited in the Liturgy after recalling Christ’s passion. This means that:

1) the mere saying of the words does not by itself constitute the “doing” bidden by Christ to His disciples at the last supper. The saying of the words gives the reason why and the authority by which the priest does what Christ did on Calvary; 2) the Church identifies the bread and the cup with the Body and Blood of Christ because Christ Himself identified them by saying what He said at the Last Supper and by thus establishing the “symbolism”; 3) the Liturgy does not merely recall the Last Supper, but the entire incarnate life and the sacrifice of Christ, and therefore makes that sacrifice operative and present by its effects in the communicants and in the Church.

In the words of St. Irenaeus, in the Eucharist “the unity of flesh and spirit” is manifested. In the words of Origen, the Church becomes in the Eucharist “the real and more perfect body of Christ, in comparison with the physical body of Christ that was crucified and rose again. The Eucharist being essentially an action, and the Church being an agent of Christ doing His will in her capacity as His Body, the Eucharist becomes necessarily Christ’s sacrificial action, and what is offered in the Eucharist becomes what Christ offered on Calvary.

The Holy Sacrifice is the development of the four elements in the action of Christ in instituting the Mystery as recorded in the Gospels. Thus Christ a) “took bread”, b) “gave thanks”, c) “broke”, and d) “gave to His disciples”: a) the Offertory, b) the Eucharistia, (c) the Intinction and Fraction, and d) the Communion correspond to these four acts of Christ.

The proper celebrant of the Holy Sacrifice in the Early Christian Church was the bishop, as the representative of Christ, who was the “president”, as it were, at the Last Supper.

From the fourth century onward the Eucharist began to be considered as a mystery which is “awful and fearful.” According to St. John Chrysostom, the Holy Sacrifice presents a moment in which “heaven is rent asunder and the angels descend”.

This development of the approach to the mystery as something “fearful” began in Jerusalem in the IV century with St. Cyril of Jerusalem and spread northward. It became a potent factor in the evolution of the Holy Liturgy in all Eastern Churches.

As a result of this evolution the worshippers did not feel that it was proper for them “to see” or “to hear” the “awful mystery”, which is not something to be publicized.

That is why the prayers of the Eucharist eventually came to be said “in secret” and that parts of the Liturgy sung or said “aloud” were gradually added in the course of subsequent centuries in order to elaborate and solemnize the sense of the prayers and to dispose the worshippers for the reception of the mystery.

19. ON THE OFFERTORY

The Offertory is when the Gifts are brought to the Altar as the offerings of the Church.

An individual layman, in making an offering of bread and wine for the Eucharist, offers himself as a priest for himself. When these individual offerings (or their substitutes in any form of donation) are gathered together, the priest offers them corporately, because in the person of the priest the Church acts as a priest to herself, offering herself to God the Father as a body.

Then God accepts this offering “in the beloved”, i.e., in Christ His Son, and makes it the body of His Son. At the culmination of this acceptance the congregation cries “Abba, Father”, by singing the Lord’s Prayer at the end of the Eucharist Prayer.

Thus the Eucharist action requires three agents. The believer makes his own offering, his gifts, for himself. The deacon brings these individual offerings together and makes them into a corporate offering of the Church. Then the bishop or the priest makes the corporate offering inside the sanctuary to God the Father, on behalf of the congregation as a whole.

Nerses of Lambron teaches that the priest only can approach God the Father inside the Sanctuary, as he represents Christ. But the people have access only to the Son. Otherwise there would be no need for Christ the Mediator, and consequently for the priest.

Irenaeus says that the Eucharist is to the Church what the little money was to the widow (Mark 12:42-44), “all her life” cast into the treasury of God. “We proclaim the unity of the flesh and the spirit ... by offering earthly things to Him”.

In Armenian the offering of the individual is called ‘arberel’ (‘to bring unto’); that of the deacon is ‘veraberel’ (‘to bring up to’) and that of the priest is ‘matoutzanel’ (‘to bring nigh to’, ‘to offer’).

20. ON THE GREAT ENTRANCE

The Great Entrance refers to the entrance of the gifts by the deacon into God’s presence on the Altar. By the same token, it represents Christ’s entry upon His redemptive work by His passion, crucifixion, and death, “together with them that are His”. It shows the going of Christ up to the Cross, which was “the Altar” of Christ’s sacrifice.

His being the heart of the mystery of salvation, only the initiated can partake in it. Hence the exclusion of “catechumens” and others who are not initiated, or baptized, as well as those who have temporarily forfeited their birthright acquired at baptism, i.e., the penitents.

The Prayer of the Great Entrance indicates the relationship of the priesthood of the Church with that of Christ.

The Responsory of the Great Entrance shows Christ as the King who marches to conquer sin and death.

During the Great Entrance the faithful should inwardly accompany Christ to His Cross, resolving to suffer with Him, to die and to conquer with Him.

In the primitive Church when the Eucharist was to begin, the oblations were solemnly brought by the deacons from the table, where they were previously placed by the

faithful, on the altar. This act has now developed into the Great Entrance, which used to take place silently until the sixth century. After this period the psalms and the chants were added for the purpose of interpretation and solemnity.

In the Armenian Liturgy known to Khosrov of Anzev (middle of tenth century) these psalms, chants, etc. are still not found. But they were already there in the middle of the twelfth century.

Until the fourth century all strangers were actually excluded from attending or taking part in the Liturgy. So there was no question of inviting everybody to the Liturgy, which was corporate but not public. Later, when child baptism became universal and there were no unbelievers, only the excommunicated and the penitents were sent out. Still later, when believers themselves became shy of offering and communicating under the pretext of unworthiness, the practice of sending out the penitents, etc., ceased. Pseudo-Dionysius (end of fifth century) says: "You must know that the distinction and separation of such classes no longer takes place."

Theodore of Mopsuestia (+ 428) writes that deacons (at the Offertory) represent the angels. They place the oblation on the altar to complete Christ's passion and to place him in the sepulchre. "They stand on both sides and agitate the air above the holy body with fan ... They show by this the greatness of the body which is lying there. For it is the custom that when the body of the great ones of this world is carried on a bier, some men should fan the air above it."

21. ON THE LAYING OF THE GIFTS

This symbolizes the laying of Christ on the Cross and in the sepulchre, as upon the altar of sacrifice. After laying the gifts on the altar the priest censes them, in remembrance of the incense which the women brought to the sepulchre of the Lord (Luke 24:1).

During the Laying of the Gifts the faithful should make acts of faith, hope and charity or love. The Litany of the

Offertory is a short paraphrase on these three great virtues. The faithful should also ask God to accept their spiritual offerings in Christ, and should make a renewed resolution to dedicate their lives to God.

The Prayers of the Offertory were added to the Liturgy during the period between the fifth and the eighth centuries. The oldest Offertory prayers are found in St. Basil's Liturgy, from which the Armenian Liturgy is derived. The Armenian Prayer of the Offertory, "Lord God of Hosts", is that of St. Basil. It bears the name of St. Athanasius, and represents an ancient tradition dating before the influence of the Jerusalem rite in Eastern Liturgies.

The Litany of the Offertory is mentioned in its present form by John Mandakouni (478-+490) in one of his homilies.

22. ON THE KISS OF PEACE OF THE GREETING

The Kiss of Peace, which is a sign of reconciliation, is the symbol of fellowship of the faithful in the Holy Spirit, and of the unity of the Church in the love of God. When the gifts are laid upon the altar, and thus the one Body of Christ, i.e., the Church with its members, is mystically laid upon the heavenly altar, God is thereby reconciled with His creatures.

When the faithful receive and give the greeting, they should endeavor to realize their inward reconciliation with God and with each one of their fellow Christians. They should try to purge themselves of pride, of hatred, of envy, of malice and such other vices as create discord and disturb the harmony in the Body of Christ, the Church.

The kissing of the cheeks was a form of salutation in the time of our Lord (Luke VII:45), as it still is in the Near East among close friends. The Apostle Paul bids the faithful "to salute one another with an holy kiss" (Rom, 16:16. 1 Cor. 16:20, 2 Cor. 12:12). The kiss is the greeting of the Lord to His own (John 20:19). Personal disputes born of hatred or ecclesiastical schism would "defile your sacrifice" and thus the unity of the Body of Christ would be violated (Matt. 5: 23).

That is why it has been the prime obligation of the believer to be reconciled with everybody in order to be worthy to receive communion, according to an early canon of the Church of the second century.

The earliest custom was to have the Greeting or the Kiss of Peace before the Offertory. In the middle of the fourth century, however, Greeting was transferred in Jerusalem to the place where it is now found in the Armenian Liturgy.

23. ON THE EUCHARISTIA

The Eucharistia or the Anaphora which is the word used in the “Apostolic Constitutions” (fourth century) is the Eucharistic Prayer, which constitutes the core of the Divine Liturgy. Eucharistia means ‘thanksgiving and Anaphora means ‘to offer sacrifices’ (Heb. 7:27 and 8:15). It begins with the Prologue and ends with the Doxology.

Khosrov of Anzev, an Armenian Church Father commenting on the Divine Liturgy, writes the following of the Eucharistia:

“He who took flesh from the virtual womb of Mary and was united with same in His full Godhead, now is united with the bread and the cup in the same manner. And He who gave up the breath on the cross shows the same bodily state of death on the altar being without breath thereon. And although always living in His Godhead, He is an immolation offered as a sacrifice to the Holy Trinity. A sacrifice which is a thanksgiving for gifts that have been received, an expiation for sins which have been committed, a redemption for them that are presumed and an intercession for the living and the dead in the time to come. These the ancient law foreshadowed by the offering of animals, some being gifts for thanksgiving, other for expiation and others for redemption, which all are contained in the mystery of the great sacrifice.” (Khosrov of Anzev, Venice, 1869, p.21).

In the Anaphora, seven distinctive themes are developed; first thanks and praises are offered to God the Father,

for having made His own those who believed in Him. Then, secondly, the work of redemption wrought in the old dispensation is recounted and related to the fulfillment of the redemption in the new dispensation, leading up to the passion and death of Christ. Then, thirdly, the process by which Christ rose from death to life is enacted. Fourthly, the fact is emphasized that the whole Church, the Body of Christ, including the faithful of the past ages, rose and shall rise to life together with Christ. Then the new status of sonship of the Church as a whole as well as individual members is realized, with the singing of "Our Father". Sixth, the humility in the incarnation as well as the glory at the right hand of the Father of Jesus Christ and consequently of His Church is indicated, and then finally the Prayer ends with the glorification of the Holy Trinity.

During the Eucharistia, the faithful, while following step by step the process indicated by the Eucharistia Prayer, should make an intense spiritual effort to feel and realize his unity with Christ and as such the fact of his being the child of God, and being in God.

Nerses of Lambron says that the priest, as "an angel", as a delegate of the people, give Christ, "a man who is one of us", to the Father and then he receives Christ, "one of the Godhead", from the Father and gives Him to the people.

24. ON THE PROLOGUE

The Prologue corresponds to the second action of Christ at the institution described by the words: "He gave thanks". Thanksgiving therefore is the main theme of the Prologue. In fact the name 'Eucharist' for the Holy Sacrifice is derived from this opening theme of the Prayer.

A sacrifice is something given for a thing received or receivable in return. But the exchange is not on the basis of parity, but on the basis of reciprocal possibility. God the Almighty in His infinite love gives his creatures their very being, and to men He gives infinitely more: He gives them

eternal life out of His eternal mercy. But what man can give God is only a token of what little he has. That is why the widow's mite, which was "all her life" cast into the treasury of God, is an example of the Holy Sacrifice. This sacrifice, therefore, can only be a token and an expression of thanksgiving.

At the Prologue the faithful should consider God's infinite mercy to themselves and to mankind, and should give Him thanks with the whole heart, which is not only "meet" and proper, but also "right" and just.

The Responsory of the Eucharist is one of the oldest parts of the Liturgy, and is characteristic to it. In its present form it is mentioned by St. John Chrysostom in 390 and before that in the Latin text of Hyppolitus (c. 217).

The Responsory of the Prologue is an extraneous item in the Liturgy. It is of recent origin and is entirely out of place. It was introduced in some texts only as late as the seventeenth century. It could therefore be conveniently omitted.

25. ON THE ANAMNESIS

In the Anamnesis are recounted all the gifts and blessings of God and all the fruits of His infinite mercy: the mercies shown in the old dispensation, and especially those in the new by the incarnation of the Son. Then the mandate of the Lord at the Last Supper is remembered and recounted. This mandate is then linked in the same sentence to the crucifixion, indication that the 'doing' bidden at the Last Supper was a 'mystery' sacramentally pre-enacting the sacrifice on Calvary, and thus showing the way in which the faithful could benefit by the passion and death and the resurrection of the Lord.

The Anamnesis is climaxed by the offering of the gifts with the words "Thine own of they own we offer, etc." This corresponds to 'consecration' in the sense that the gifts are set apart for God's use. It indicates the moment when Christ, having "given up the ghost" on the Cross, gave Himself to death.

The Prayer of Humble Access is reminiscent of the state of the soul and the disposition of the incense-bearing women and the apostles, who were on their way on East morning towards the tomb, where the Lord was laid. They were humble and despondent but faith and hope and love impelled them on their way.

During the Anamnesis the faithful should recapitulate in their minds and meditate on the events of the life and passion and death of Christ. Then they should endeavor to realize the fact that they are “in Christ” and as such they are to relive Christ’s life on earth with Him. And they should make an inward, spiritual offering of themselves to God, together with Christ being offered on the Altar.

The words of institution as preserved in the Liturgy are not the same as quoted in the Gospels. This is due to the fact that before the books of the New Testament were canonized, various churches had their own traditions of quote phrases, and their Liturgies were shaped in accordance with these traditions.

The Sanctus was introduced into the Liturgy in Egypt in or before the year 230. It can be traced back into the writings of Origen (+ 254 A.D.) and even to Clement of Alexandria before him.

The Preface as well as the Sanctus were borrowed by Cyril of Jerusalem (+386 A.D.) from Egypt.

The last part of the Anamnesis, making mention of the ascension, the sitting at the right hand of God and the last judgment, was introduced in the Eucharistic Prayer later in the fourth century.

The reference in the first part of the Anamnesis to the Fall, to Eden, to the Law, the Prophets are traced to the writings of St. John Chrysostom, belonging to the Antiochean period of his life. These references afford one of the signs of the influence of the Antiochean tradition on the Armenian Liturgy.

The hymns to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit (“Heavenly Father”, “Son of God”, “Spirit of God”) as

well as the hagiodies began to be used in the Armenian Liturgy from the beginning of the 14th century onwards.

26. ON THE EPICLESIS

The Epiclesis corresponds to the moment when Christ's body in the tomb was changed into living, glorified body. The Gifts up to now represented the figures or the symbols, "the mysteries", of the earthly body of Christ. At the Epiclesis, when the Holy Spirit descends and infuses the Gifts, they become the "mysteries", the "symbols" of the living glorified body of Christ. In the same manner did the Lord's body in the tomb become living through the Holy Spirit and rose from the dead.

Theodore of Mopsuestia (+ 418), expressing the mind of the Church in his time, writes: "It is necessary that our Lord should now rise from the dead ...and that He should spread His grace over us. This cannot happen otherwise than by the coming of the grace of the Holy Spirit, through which the latter had also raised Him previously, as the blessed Paul has shown (Rom. 1:4)."

The bread and the cup in the Eucharist, however, are not merely symbols of the body and blood of Christ in the modern sense of the word 'symbol', which usually is not that which it signifies. For the fathers of the Church, who often use the word 'symbol' with reference to the bread and the cup of the Eucharist, a symbol denotes a thing which in some kind of way is what it signifies. Thus for the Fathers a symbol is the manifestation of the secret reality of the thing symbolized.

Nerses of Lambron views the Eucharist also from another angle. According to him until the Invocation the bread and the wine are offered as the symbols of the earthly body and blood of Christ by the priest. These visible and material symbols are offered to God side by side with the invisible and spiritual offering by the faithful. At the Invocation these two offerings are made one by God the Father.

During His life on earth Christ received the Holy Spirit on our behalf, being con-substantial with men. At the Eucharist “the blessing of the bread and the cup signifies the imparting of the power of our Lord’s body, i.e., the Spirit of Grace, to the Gifts”. Thus the Grace of God makes the “bread and the wine of Christ, the Body and Blood of Christ.” By communicating with this Body and Blood of Christ the faithful receive the same Spirit.

Nerses of Lambron has further the following to say on the Epiclesis:

“And how can this (i.e., the Gifts) be changed by the Holy Spirit from being a reality? Let us show by an example: When we take the body of a man without the spirit (= the soul), it can be said to be the symbol of man, but not a real man. But when by God’s will a reasonable spirit (soul) is united with a dead (= material) body, then this is said to be a real, living man. The spirit (soul) which was united with the body is not visible to our sensible eyes, nor can we see thereby anything added to the body, but only we see the same body living by the spirit (soul).

“In the same way these symbols of the Body and Blood of Christ were paradigms put before God by the priest; they were the signs of the reality of the reasonable sacrifice. But God the Father, taking the reasonable sacrifice together with its symbols, breathed, in His omnipotence, the life-giving Spirit into the lifeless body. Thus He made that which was at first a (merely) sensible body, not the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit. Similarly by the union of the Spirit of Christ with the wine, He made it to be the blood of Christ. And as by the union of the spirit (soul) with the body nothing material is added to the essence of the body, but only thereby matter is energized and becomes operative as living, so also in the same way when the Spirit of God is united with this (the bread), and it is made to be the body of Christ, no change or addition is made to the matter, but only it receives intelli-

gible power and thus becomes operative in them that taste of it.”[‡]

The word in the Armenian Liturgy for the changing of the bread and the wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is ‘transposition’ (p’okharkel). By this the material elements as such remain the same in every respect except that they receive a new function and a new power, and are thereby raised to a level or role in the order of things, by virtue of their being consecrated to be a vehicle of the Spirit, and thus being spiritualized.

During the Epiclesis the faithful, while praying with the priest so that God may send the Holy Spirit upon the Gifts, should also pray their heavenly Father to send the same Holy Spirit into their souls, so that they may be one with Christ and His Church, and may thus be transfigured and raised together with Christ, after the remission of their sins.

According to the text used by Khosrov of Anzev (950 A.D.) for his Commentary, the Prayer of Epiclesis was addressed to the Holy Spirit. Until the fifteenth century a few manuscripts still have the Prayer addressed to the Second Person of the Trinity. After the 12th century, the Prayer to the Father prevailed and became universal.

27. ON THE DIPTYCHS

St. Paul says that the Eucharist is an anticipation of God’s judgment, it is an occasion on which God’s judgment is pre-exercised (1 Cor. 11:29-32). The judgment is the act of God by which each soul receives his reward or punishment in accordance with his merits in the sight of God. The judgment moreover is the moment when the souls of the faithful

[‡] Commentary on the mystery of the Holy Sacrifice by Nerses of Lamb-
ron, Archbishop of Tarsus of Cilicia, written in 1177. Printed in Jerusa-
lem, 1842, p. 108 (in Armenian).

“are gathered together” in the Kingdom of Heaven. That is the reason why the dead are mentioned in the Holy Sacrifice.

The souls of those who have died in Christ and the souls of the saints belong to the corporate body of Christ, i.e., the Church, and therefore they cannot be left out of any vital act of the Church. Prayers “for them that are asleep in Christ” will link their souls with those of the living, so that “the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:16).

Thus the Diptychs signify and emphasize the fact that the souls of the dead are part of the living body of Christ and that they also rise with Christ.

When the General Intercessions are made during the Diptychs, the faithful should remember and pray for the faithful of the past ages, who lived and died in Christ and who carried forward and handed down the faith to the succeeding generations. The members of the congregation should recall and realize the fact that they belong to the same spiritual family under the fatherhood of God, and that the souls of the dead in Christ speak and work in and through them.

During the Special Intercessions each one of the faithful should remember and pray for their own dead, belonging to the immediate circle of their family, relatives, friends and acquaintances. They should also especially remember and pray for them for which the prayer of the congregation has been requested through announcement in the church.

The Diptychs for the dead date from 240 in Africa, in the time of St. Cyprian. From there they spread to Jerusalem, where they were said after the Epiclesis. St. Cyril speaks of the Diptychs having practically the same form and place as they have in the Armenian Liturgy. He says that the commemoration of the dead “will be of special assistance to their souls”.

Originally the Diptychs stood at the end of the Synaxis, in the Prayers of the Faithful. Later they were joined with the

Great Entrance (as it is present in the Greek Liturgy). Finally they were put in the body of the Eucharist Prayer where many liturgies now have them. In the fifth century (420 A.D.) the Diptychs acquired special importance in Constantinople and it became a great problem as to who should be mentioned in the Diptychs.

The intercessions for the living were added to those for the dead in Constantinople, and from there the custom spread to all other churches.

Faustus of Byzantium, writing towards the end of the fourth century, says that the Armenian Patriarch of the period, St. Vertanes, ordered that "When the names of saints are commemorated in the course of the Liturgy, after them those who had died in battle for the deliverance of their country should also be mentioned".

The Armenian Liturgy has two litanies and two prayers of intercessions. This is probably due to the fact that the General Intercessions, brought into the Eucharistic Prayer from the end of the Synaxis, were preserved intact side by side with the Special Intercessions, which already belonged to the Eucharistic Prayer.

The Armenian Liturgy in having intercessions in the form of litanies follows the Antiochean custom.

Khostov of Anzev (950 A.D.) has the following to say about the Litany of General Intercessions: "The Litany proper has many verses, which are said on feast days by those who are careful about the order of the (service). What, however, could be briefly said during the holy Liturgy is this: Of the ever virgin Mother-of-God, of John the Baptist, of St. Stephen remembrance be made (in this holy Sacrifice). – Of holy apostles, of prophets, of martyrs, of Peter and of Paul and of all the saints remembrance be made (in this holy sacrifice). – Of holy patriarchs, of the blessed Saint Gregory and of all holy and orthodox bishops and priests and of all (the children of) the covenant of the Church remembrance be made (in this holy Sacrifice). – Of all men and women who

in faith have fallen asleep in Christ remembrance be made (in this holy Sacrifice).”

The Litany of Special Intercessions should be, according to some authorities of the 12th and subsequent centuries, in the imperative mood, beginning: “Thanks-giving and glory let us offer ... etc.”

The second verse of the Litany of General Intercessions (“Of our leaders ...”) is an addition by the Patriarch-Catholicos Simeon in the second half of the 18th century.

28. ON THE LORD’S PRAYER

After the acceptance of the Sacrifice by God, when the union of the faithful in the Church with Christ is once more assured, when the faithful have “received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry: Abba, father,” when the Spirit bears witness “that we are the children of God ... and joint heirs with Christ” (Rom. XIII:15-17, Gal. IV:6-7), then the congregation exultantly bursts into singing the Lord’s Prayer. Thus the singing of the Lord’s Prayer is the climax of what went before in the Divine Liturgy.

While the Litany is being recited and the Lord’s Prayer is being sung, the faithful should follow their meanings with earnest attention, and they should rejoice and be exceedingly glad for their privilege of being the children of the heavenly Father. They should further resolve to be worthy of such an infinitely great and wonderful status.

The first evidence attesting to the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer in the Liturgy is found in the writings of St. Cyril of Jerusalem in 348. The custom established in Jerusalem soon became prevalent throughout the churches in the East. In Rome we see the Lord’s Prayer said during the Eucharist at the end of the sixth century.

29. ON THE INCLINATION AND ELEVATION

The Christian, after realizing his lofty status of being the Son of God and joint heir with Christ, can only be “kept

whole” by virtue of his humility, as the Prayer of Inclination suggests. The Inclination signifies the profound truth of the paradox that we can only have the right to be proud by being humble, just as Christ went through the uttermost degree of humility before He rose and ascended into heaven. Humility, the greatest of virtues, is the condition of the possession of our patrimony. And the Prayer of Inclination is addressed to the Holy Spirit because He is the source of all virtues.

The Elevation brings to mind the Ascension of Christ, whereby He went up to heaven, up to His holiness, and “sat with the Father”, as the wording of the Prayer of Elevation indicates. It shows the highest point of the upward process of the life of the soul. The words of the Elevation: “unto holiness to the holy”, or “holy things to the holy, as the Greek Liturgy has it, means that “the things of God are for the people of God”. Or, if we follow the Armenian wording more closely in the light of the Prayer of Elevation, it means that the holiness of Christ in heaven, as manifested through the ‘mystery’ of His Body and Blood, makes the believers holy, or that the ‘mystery’ of the Sacrifice is for the holiness of the faithful. The ‘holy’ are the ‘saints’ or the members of the Church, who are holy by virtue of their faith and their repentance.

During the Inclination and Elevation the faithful should first bow down and pray for the virtue of humility for the health and wholeness of their soul. Then rising, they should raise their inward eyes up to heaven and to the throne of God, and should pray the Lord for holiness and for the life of the Spirit from on high.

There is evidence that at the beginning of the fifth century the Armenian Liturgy contained the Prayer of Inclination, and accompanied with the posture of profound bowing-down, followed the Dominical Prayer.

The Hymn of Elevation is first recorded by St. Cyril of Jerusalem. Its use has subsequently spread from Jerusalem throughout the churches in the East.

30. ON THE DOXOLOGY

The Doxology is the concluding finale of the Eucharistic Prayer, after reaching the point in the Elevation, which indicates the sitting of Christ In glory on His heavenly throne at the right hand of the Father.

The Doxology is beautifully and dramatically expanded and made expressive, because of its importance with reference to the high point of the spiritual experience of the faithful.

The Amen, thrice sung in the Blessing to the Holy Trinity, then again at the end of it, and once more in concluding the Hymn of Doxology, can be said to sum up the whole of the Liturgy. In Christ is the “Amen” by the faithful to the glory of God (2 Cor. I:20). In saying this ‘Amen’ the faithful seal their participation in the Sacrifice of Christ. It is the human response to what God wills and affirms. It signifies the total submission of man to God, which submission is the condition which makes communion saving. The importance of this Amen is stressed by Justin Martyr (writing in 145) as the assent of the people to the president’s (the bishop’s) Prayers of the Liturgy.

While the Doxology is being sung, the faithful should join the priest and the clerks in giving glory and blessings to the Holy Trinity with a heart full of thankfulness and joy.

The Hymn of the Doxology is first mentioned by Theodor of Mopsuestia (+ 428). Its use has entered Egypt as well as Armenia from Antioch.

31. ON THE INTINCTION AND FRACTION

Blood is the symbol of life. We were saved by Christ’s blood. It was shed and spread over the faithful unto salvation and resurrection to life. Consequently the mystical Body of Christ, the Church, was saved and washed of sins by the blood of Christ. By the immersion of the sacramental body of Christ in the sacramental blood this salvation by Christ’s blood is signified. By the same token the spiritual baptism of

the believers by the Spirit and His fire, through communion with the living and glorified Body of Christ and through the washing by His Blood, is indicated by the act of intinction in the Eucharist.

Fraction is symbolic of the unity of the Body of Christ in the multiplicity of the individual members who form the Church. Thus the one loaf is broken and distributed among the people. Fraction, following the Eucharistia, corresponds to the action of the Lord when He “broke the bread”, after “giving thanks”, and said it should be distributed among many.

The statement: “The fulfillment of the Holy Spirit”, indicates that the work of the Holy Spirit both in relation to the Gifts and also in relation to the preparation of the soul of the believer for the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ has been fulfilled.

During the Intinction and Fraction the faithful should recall their baptism of the water and of the Spirit, by which they were cleansed of the sin and received spiritual power from God. They should renew their realization that they are saved by Christ’s Blood and that they share this salvation with their fellow Christians, with whom they are one.

The custom of dividing the host into four parts during Fraction became general in about the tenth century.

The Prayer of Fraction is taken from the apocryphal “Life of St. John”, late in the second century.

In the Armenian Church until the twelfth century the two elements, the precious Body and the Blood were given separately at the communion, the Proto-deacon carrying the cup at the time of communion. Intinction, therefore, was not practiced before that date. From the 12th century onwards, however, intinction was the universal practice. As to the moment of intinction, in some churches the host was dipped whole in the cup soon after Doxology, while in others, one fourth of the Host was dipped in the Cup immediately before the Fulfillment of the Holy Spirit and the rest after the Prayers of Thanksgiving, just before the tasting by the Celebrant.

32. ON THE COMMUNION

Communion is the final act of the Holy Sacrifice. It is the sacramental union of the believer with Lord Christ. Its effect is remission of the sins of the communicant, his sanctification and reception by him of the power of the Spirit and of eternal life, which was promised by the Lord Jesus Christ to them that would taste of His Body and Blood.

Communion is the act by which the believer ‘mystically’ or sacramentally received the Holy Spirit through Christ. For this reason it brings to mind the day of Pentecost when the Church and her members received the Holy Spirit sent by the Father through Christ. As Pentecost concluded the cycle of events connected with the work of Christ Incarnate, so also communion concludes the ‘mystical’ theosis of the believer through the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

The faithful should approach communion with full consciousness of the importance of their act for the health and salvation of their souls. They should receive communion feeling “hungry and thirsty” for it, feeling the necessity for the cleansing of their souls, when they are repentant and humble, and when they are aright in their faith.

Communion is the exclusive and great privilege of an orthodox Christian, and he should be fully conscious of it. He should be careful to communicate only in the church of which he is a member. And in case of urgent necessity, when he cannot reach his Church, he should apply only to churches that are recognized by his own church as being orthodox.

33. ON THE PRAYERS BEFORE COMMUNION

The Prayers before Communion are expressions of joy and gratitude at the privilege of being accounted worthy of communicating with Christ, and thereby being enlightened with divine Light. They are also entreaties addressed to God to make the communicants worthy of the great mystery, in

spite of their unworthiness, and endow them with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, cleansing them of their sins.

The second and third prayers are private prayers by the priest and are addressed to Christ, whereas the first is addressed to the Father and is said on behalf of all the congregation.

When the Hymn of Praise is sung and the prayers are said, the faithful should ask for the gifts of the Holy Spirit to make them worthy of the Holy Communion, either on that particular day or in the proper time in future. These gifts are humility, saintliness, joy and gratitude for being an orthodox Christian, fortitude to resist the spiritual enemy, etc.

The Hymn of Praise is one of the oldest hymns in the Liturgy and is mentioned by St. Cyril of Jerusalem (+ 348). It combines the psalms 34 and 150. St. Nerses of Kla, surnamed “the Graceful”, has given it its present form in the Armenian Liturgy, according to a note in a MS of 1340.

The Prayers before Communion, or the Ante-Communion Prayers, have all come to be used in the Armenian Liturgy after the thirteenth century. The third prayer is not found in most manuscripts of even the fifteenth century. It may have been used only in some churches during the period from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century, at which time it was incorporated in printed texts and became general.

(The only singular pronoun ‘my’, in the first Ante-Communion Prayer, should be read ‘our’, in the plural.)

34. ON THE PARTAKING

By partaking of the mystical body and blood of Christ, the spiritual and bodily life of a Christian are seen to be bound together, and their unity is sacramentally realized. Augustine says: “If you have received well, you are that which you have received,” i.e., by partaking a communicant is actually incorporated, integrated in the Body of Christ.

St. Nerses of Lambron remarks: “The Lord is always distributed, but He is never exhausted, because in the Eucha-

rist we taste of the love and the spiritual power of the Lord, which is inexhaustible”.

By partaking a Christian will have Christ with him “always, even unto the end of the world”. Therefore the faithful, if they are spiritually prepared by repentance, confession and penance, (which they should endeavor always to be), should not fail to receive communion as often as possible. The more their soul is nourished, the healthier it will be. Because although they are always liable to sin, living as they do in a sinful world, communion will give them the strength to resist evil, and will procure forgiveness for their lapses, due to human frailty and the weakness of the flesh.

The Prayer of Tasting is derived from what is called “The Eucharist of the Holy Apostle Thomas”, which belongs to the fifth century.

From earliest times communion was received standing, as mentioned by Hippolytus (217 A.D.), who also says that the clergy receive before the laity.

Faustus of Byzantium, an Armenian historian of the end of the fourth century, mentions the fact that in his time the celebrant priest took the communion and came down from the Altar and the Ambon to the people and after communicating them, returned the remainder of the Gifts back to the Altar.

It is noteworthy that in the Armenian Church the sacrament is not usually reserved on the Main Altar, but on the table of Prothesis or in a side chapel. This is in accordance with the ancient conception that the Altar is only for the vital sacramental act of the Holy Sacrifice itself.

35. ON THE THANKSGIVING

After the Partaking, the essential parts of the Holy Sacrifice come to an end. The Thanksgiving is a review of the benefits which the faithful have derived from Communion, as well as an expression of thanks for them. It also contains prayers asking God to make those benefits abiding.

During the Thanksgiving the faithful should concentrate their minds on what has taken place in them and should resolve to make their lives in the outside world infused and enlightened with the grace which they have received through the Holy Sacrifice.

Corporate thanksgivings after communion began to make their appearance in the Liturgy in Syria and Egypt in the fourth century. The primitive Eucharist, being itself a Thanksgiving had no prayers of thanksgiving after communion.

The hymn “We are filled” is of Byzantine origin. It is still sung in the Slavic Liturgy, as it is in the Armenian.

The Prayers of Thanksgiving were added to the Armenian Liturgy in the course of the 13th century. The first of these was originally sung by the Clerks. All three of these prayers are optional.

Theophilus of Alexandria (+ 412) writes: “The things which are offered for the purpose of the Sacrifice, after what is chosen for the need of the mysteries, the clergy shall distribute; and no catechumen is to eat or drink of these, but only the clergy and the faithful and the faithful brethren with them.” Accordingly the distribution of mas is probably a survival of this custom of apportioning of what was left of the oblations after the Offertory.

Mas means ‘portion’ in Armenian, and it corresponds to the Antidoron or the Eulogia in the Greek church. It is unconsecrated bread, unleavened, which is brought to the church in some quantity, and at the end of the Liturgy is distributed to those in the congregation who have not received communion. It is also taken to the members of the household who have not been able to come to church. The person giving the mas says: “may this be thee a share and a portion from the holy sacrifice.” The person receiving says: “Blessed is God”.

36. ON THE PRAYER AMID THE CHURCH

The prayer amid the Church is a closing prayer, spreading, so to speak, the blessings of the Holy Sacrifice over the whole church of Christ and the world.

During the Prayer amid the Church the faithful should remember their brethren of the faith throughout the world, their country, the secular authorities and all mankind.

The prayer: “the fulfillment of the law” is from St. Basil’s Liturgy. It appears in the Armenian Liturgy in the twelfth century.

37. ON THE LAST GOSPEL

The Last Gospel gives the theological foundation of the doctrine of the Sacrament of Holy Sacrifice according to the doctrine of the New Testament. “And the word was made flesh” is the key phrase and the reception of the Word is paralleled with the reception of Christ through the Holy Sacrifice.

Listening to the Last Gospel the faithful should realize that through communion the Word dwells among them.

The Last Gospel, with the litany and the prayer following it, was introduced into the Armenian Liturgy as late as only the end of the seventeenth century.

At the beginning of the same century John 21:1, 5-19 began to be read. Later this passage was substituted by the present passage, John 1:1-14, on the example of the Latin rite.

38. ON THE BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

This last part is an appropriate way of sending the faithful off.

On leaving the Church the faithful should see that they take God’s blessing with them into their daily life in the world.

ARCHBISHOP TIRAN NERSOYAN

“Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Apostolic Church”

(pp. 293-312)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

On Divine Liturgy

Q. During the Divine Liturgy why is not the Trisagion (the “Soorp Asdvadz”) followed by the chant to the Blessed Virgin (“Parravoryal yev orhnyal mishd soorp Gooyes ...”) as is done at the matins and vespers services?

A. The saints, even the Saint of saints herself, have received their power of intercession through the redemptive life, death and resurrection of Christ. In the divine Liturgy, which is the mystical re-representation of the whole life of Christ, his Death on the cross occurs at the Consecration or Epiclesis (while the choir sings the Hymn “vorti Asdoodzo vor badarakyal ...”) and his Resurrection occurs at the institution (when the priest immerses the sacramental Body in the sacramental Blood while the choir sings “Orhnootyoon Hor yev vortvo yev Hokvooyen Surpo ...”)

At the singing of the “Soorp Asdvadz ...” and the raising of the Gospel book Christ is entering upon his preaching ministry and has not yet accomplished his mediatory work of redemption and the saints therefore have not yet received their power of intercession. Hence the chant of the Blessed Virgin imploring her intercession is not included at this time. In the light of this it is significant that solemn commemoration of the Virgin and all other saints (“Asdvadzadzni surpo goosin Mariamoo yev Hovhannoo Mugurdchin ...”) begins to be made in the Divine Liturgy after Christ dies for us on the cross, that is, after the Consecration of the Elements. But even then the saints are only commemorated and not petitioned to intercede, for Christ has not yet risen, has not yet (in the liturgy) completed his meditorial work of redemption.

VERY REV. MESROB SEMERJIAN
“The Armenian Guardian” March 1970 (p. 22)

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ARMENIAN PEOPLE

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

Armenia occupies the rugged land between the Caucasus and the Mediterranean, and is partly in Europe, partly in Asia Minor. Tradition places in Armenia the site of the Garden of Eden. At least two of the rivers mentioned in the Book of Genesis (2:14), the Euphrates and the Tigris, have their source in and flow partly through Armenia. Mount Ararat, where the Ark of Noah rested after the Flood (Gen. 8:4), is in the heart of the Armenian Highlands. Armenia is a biblical land.

The Armenians belong to the Indo-European family of nations. During, or before the 7th century B.C., as part of the great Aryan migration, a new Aryan people, evidently coming from Thrace, poured into this land, conquered the native Urartians, who once formed a powerful state defying the might of Assyria, assimilated them. These newcomers were called Armens by the Greek and Persians, and it is under this name (Armenians) that they came to be known in all European languages. However, the Armenians call themselves “Hye” (pronounced “high”) and their country “Hayastan” (High-astan).

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The history of Armenia is an inspiring record of national fortitude and cultural achievement. It is a tenacious struggle against tyranny, for human freedom. We find the Armenians first struggling against the Persians (521 B.C.) and then against Alexander the Great and his successors, the Seleucids. At the beginning of the 2nd century B.C. during the reign of Artashes I (Artaxes) Armenia became an independent and organized state. In the second half of the first century B.C., Armenia became a major power in the East. The reign of Tigran (Tigranes) the Great (95-55 B.C.), is a glorious epoch in Armenian political and military history. His rule extended from

the Caucasian mountains to Palestine, from Persia to the heart of Asia Minor. He gave to himself the title of “King of Kings”, and his conquered kings were used as his servants.

In the middle of the first century B.C., the Romans, with the help of the rebellious son of Tigran, reduced Armenia to its proper boundaries. Thereafter Armenia became the buffer state between the Romans, who pressed her constantly from the West, and of the Persians, who tried incessantly to occupy the country from the East. This fatal position of ancient Armenia between the great rival states of the East and the West, which continued throughout her history, was one of the chief causes which hindered her prosperity and had an unfavorable influence on her political development. Owing to its physical and geographical characteristics Armenia has always been a gigantic natural fortress and was strategically most important as a base both for assault and defense. It was precisely because of its strategic value that wars were constantly waged for the possession of Armenia, and that her history is so closely connected with that of the great empires of the ancient and modern world.

In 301 Armenia accepted Christianity as its state religion through the efforts of St. Gregory, the Enlightener, and by the royal edict of King Tiridates. In 384 the country was divided between the Byzantine and Persian Empires. The latter allowed its kings to remain on the throne until 428 A.D., when at the demand of the Armenian nobility (feudal lords) the Persians deposed the king of Armenia and sent governors, Satraps, to rule the country.

UNDER FOREIGN RULE

In 451 the Persians tried to convert Armenia back to pagan Mazdaism, but the Armenians resisted successfully. St. Vartan the General and St. Leon the priest were the leaders of this famous resistance. The Arabs began to invade the country in the year 639. The Armenians revolted many times for political independence against both the Arabs and the

Persians but without success because of lack of unity. At last in 885, a wise native prince Ashot Pakradoony succeeded by peaceful means in assuming the title of king under the nominal supremacy of the Arab Califs. This line of semi-independent kings of Armenia lasted for two centuries (885-1070). The Byzantine Empire absorbed this little kingdom, as well as many smaller principalities in Armenia. The Armenians, however, formed a strong element in the Byzantine Empire; they gave fighting forces and many generals and twelve emperors to the tottering throne of Constantinople.

CILICIA: LESSER ARMENIA

Greater Armenia, the original home of the Armenian people, was never again a political unit, as the Byzantines, the Seljuk Turks, and the Tartars successfully seized parts of the country and fought over it. As a result of these incessant invasions and wars the Armenians began to migrate to other countries. A great number settled in Cilicia on the Mediterranean. In their new land the Armenians founded an independent principality in 1080. It became a kingdom under Leon II (1198), who was respected by the Crusaders, Byzantine and Mohammedans alike. During this period the Armenians came in direct contact with the Europeans through the Crusaders whom they helped greatly and fraternized with them.

The last king of Armenia, Leon VI, is buried in Paris, where he died while seeking the help of the Christian powers to regain his kingdom.

After the fall of the Cilician Kingdom in 1375, the Armenians passed under the yoke of the Ottoman Turks and Persians. As a result of the Russo-Turkish wars of 1829, Armenia was finally partitioned among these three powers.

During the long years of their struggle for existence, the Armenians never abandoned their hope for independence, and made desperate attempts to regain it. These attempts culminated, after indescribable sufferings and massacres at the hands of the Turks, in the creation of a little independent

Armenian Republic in the Caucasus in 1918. President Wilson, in 1920, at the request of the Allies, delineated the boundaries of a greater Armenia, closer to 60,000 sq. miles which, however, never materialized. Since 1920 a section of Armenia with an area of only 11,000 sq. miles, has been incorporated in the Soviet Union, as one of its fifteen national republics. The greater part of the country is still under the Turkish occupation.

ARMENIAN CULTURE

The archaeological discoveries not only in Armenia but also in neighboring countries have shown that Armenian culture is of an original nature. Authorities have shown that in architecture, in metallurgy, in artistic design and motifs, ancient Armenian culture has influenced the arts and crafts of its neighbors. The influence of the Armenian Church architecture has, according to some European scholars (notably Strzygowski, an Austrian) spread even to the West. Its folk music and dances are highly appreciated. Armenian miniatures occupy a prominent place in the history of fine arts. Armenia has a vast number of cuneiform inscriptions, most of which are still waiting to be deciphered. From the 5th century A.D., soon after the discovery of the Armenian alphabet, Armenians developed a classical literature of unique value, which is our main source of information not only of the ancient history and philosophic thought of Armenia, but of neighboring countries as well.

FOREIGN OPINION ON THE ARMENIANS

“THE ARMENIANS ARE A NOBLE RACE.”

- Dr. Cyrus Hamlin

Thirty-five years a missionary in Constantinople and the founder of Robert College. From a letter to the New York Herald, December 18, 1894.

“TO SERVE ARMENIA IS TO SERVE CIVILIZATION.”

- W. E. Gladstone

“THE MORE WE FATHOM THEIR DISTANT PAST, THE MORE WE BEGIN TO REALIZE THE CONSTRUCTIVE AND ENLIGHTENING RULE PLAYED BY THE ARMENIANS IN THE WORLD HISTORY OF CIVILIZATION.”

- Herr Haupt

A noted scholar, in his “Armenia’s Past and Present.”

“THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ARMENIAN PEOPLE IS OFTEN IGNORED. THE ARMENIANS HAVE PLAYED IN ANTIQUITY AND MORE ESPECIALLY IN THE MIDDLE AGES, AN IMPORTANT ROLE. AS A FACTOR OF CIVILIZATION IN THE ORIENT, THE ARMENIAN IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN IS GENERALLY REALIZED. THE ARMENIANS ARE, WITHOUT DOUBT, INTELLECTUALLY THE MOST AWAKE AMONGST ALL THE PEOPLES THAT INHABIT THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE. THEY ARE SUPERIOR TO TURKS AND KURDS.”

- Professor Karl Roth

In his “Armenien und Deutschland.”

“THE ARMENIANS CONSTITUTE THE SOLE CIVILIZING, THE SOLE HUMANIZING ELEMENT IN ANATOLIA; PEACEFUL TO THE DEGREE OF SELF-SACRIFICE; LAW-ABIDING TO THEIR OWN UNDOING AND INDUSTRIOUS AND HOPEFUL UNDER CONDITIONS WHICH WOULD APPALL THE MAJORITY OF MANKIND. AT THEIR BEST THEY ARE THE STUFF OF WHICH HEROES AND MARTYRS ARE MOULDED.”

- Dr. E. J. Dillon

A well-known English writer on the Near East, in his “Armenia, an Appeal.”

Contemporary Review, 1896, Vol. 69, Page 1.

“THE ARMENIANS ARE A PEOPLE OF LARGE AND NOBLE CAPACITIES. FOR AGES THEY HAVE MAINTAINED THEIR CIVILIZATION UNDER OPPRESSION THAT WOULD HAVE CRUSHED ALMOST ANY OTHER PEOPLE. THE ARMENIAN IS ONE OF THE FINEST RACES IN THE WORLD. IF I WERE ASKED TO MAKE THE MOST DESIRABLE RACES TO BE ADDED BY IMMIGRATION TO THE AMERICAN POPULATION, I WOULD NAME AMONG THE VERY FIRST THE ARMENIAN.”

- The late Andrew D. White
United States Ambassador to Germany
and Founder of Cornell University, in his Autobiography

BOOKLET No. 1

Published by

The Diocese of the Armenian Church of California

October 1953

THE FIRST PRINTING OF THE HOLY BIBLE IN ARMENIAN AND ITS LABORERS

I

The need of making God's word or the "Good News" accessible to the Armenian people, in their own language, was one of the main reasons which inspired Mesrob Mash-totz to devote himself to the demanding task of inventing the Armenian Alphabet. Encouraged and assisted by the Armenian religious and civil authorities of the day, namely Catholicos Sahak and king Vramshabouh, he proved successful in his efforts which brought joy and satisfaction to the entire Armenian people.

In the years 404-405, the Armenian people already had their Alphabet and at the end of the following 30 years they were given the Armenian translation of the Holy Bible, the result of the toilsome labors of St. Sahak Catholicos and St. Mesrob Vardapet and their disciples and associates.

This realization served to greatly dispel the fear of foreign influences and to put an end to the necessity of reading the Holy Bible in the Greek and Assyrian languages in the Armenian Churches. Now, the Armenian Christians already had all the facilities for reading and learning the true meaning of God's words in their own language.

II

More than twelve centuries have lapsed since those years. In their national and religious life the Armenian people have gone through the bloody horrors of fire and sword, but we did not want to be crushed and we were not crushed. We have endured all kinds of oppression which have fallen upon us as a result of invasions and ambitions of both heathen and Christian conquerors; and additionally from the selfish and seductive preaching and proselytizing of other Christian churches.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries we find the Armenian people scattered and defenseless both as regards State and Church authority. An Armenian historian of the time described the situation most clearly as follows: “Scattered here and there, we are like a vineyard having no wall and no guard, and we resemble sheep in the midst of wolves and lambs in the midst of lions; we all are slaves under cruel lords, who chastise and torture us avariciously and without satisfaction, day in and day out, for our offences, because we are needy and poor and cannot take a step without fear and impending great peril ... We also are like a dry field which waits for rain from heaven ...” (Catholicos Azaria – “Sion”, 1966, page 89).

The authorities of the Roman Catholic Church, whose ingenious agents had already penetrated into Armenia since the days of the Crusades, had helped in bringing about the downfall of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia and had succeeded in forcing its own influence into the Armenian Church. In order to fight against these Roman fanatics it was necessary to have educated and well prepared clergymen for the Armenian Church, those able to preach the real truths of the Gospel and to protect the traditions of the Armenian Church. It was also essential that these members of the “guard”, trained to protect the Armenian Church, have in hand the Holy Bible in Armenian, to thus be able to confront the seducers with the very weapon under their own use, that is the Bible in its orthodox interpretation.

The same Catholicos Azaria informs us that in those crucial days there were scarcely twenty Bibles in the whole of Armenia; these were of course manuscripts which were owned by privileged persons (“Sion”, 1966, p. 54). Therefore, it was essential for the Armenians in general to have at their disposal that all-important weapon for the defense of their faith.

Those in Armenian intellectual circles already knew about Guttenberg’s invention, because 56-57 years later, in 1512, the first book printed in Armenian (“Barzadoumar” – a Calendar) was already available as the result of the efforts of

Hacob Meghabard. However, the art of Armenian printing would grow and flourish through the printing of the Bible; and the new Armenian culture, in its various phases, would receive a new incentive and prosper even more, because God would thus continue “to speak Armenian” in a stronger voice to the masses of the Armenian people inspiring them with courage to once more wage war against the interloper and his destructive influences.

III

The invention of the Armenian Alphabet and the translation of the Bible into Armenian were realized by two clergymen of the Armenian Church: an enlightened Catholicos, St. Sahak, and ever-alert Vardapet (Doctor-priest), St. Mesrob. Their most valuable and everlasting achievement made it possible for the Armenian people’s national identity and Christian faith to be further strengthened upon more solid foundation.

We are indebted again to a zealous Catholicos and a daring Vardapet of the Armenian Church, namely Hacob IV Joughaetzi, Catholicos of All Armenians, and the Vardapet Voskan Yerevantzi, for the engraving of Armenian letters and the printing of the Bible in Armenian, a heroic accomplishment indeed.

A chronological-historical sketch regarding the work and the workers is given here below to show us the course of the first printing of the Bible in Armenian, and to discern how this desired goal was achieved after overcoming unimaginable set-backs and obstacles.

IN THE YEAR:

1614 VOSKAN was born in Nor-Jougha, Persia; his parents, known by their family name of Kelijentz or Kelijian, were emigrants from Erevan, Armenia. Moved by an inner prodding to become a celibate priest, even in his

- childhood, against the wish of his parents, he devoted himself to the study of the Holy Bible.
- 1628 He entered the religious school opened in the monastery of Nor-Jougha by the Vardapet Khatchadour Kesaratzi who was the delegate of the Holy See. This Khatchadour Vardapet, considered as “deserving the name of the Armenian Guttenberg”, had an early desire to print the Holy Bible in Armenian.
- 1629 Voskan left for Etchmiadzin, with Catholicos Movsess, where he followed the teachings of Melikset Vejantzi, a scholar Vardapet, despite the fact that the sciences taught by him were not agreeable to the religious authorities and to the people of those days.
- 1631 Voskan returned to Nor-Jougha with his first teacher, Vardapet Khatchadour Kesaratzi, who was invited by a special delegation to become the Primate of Nor-Jougha.
- 1633 Invited by Pilibos I Aghbaketzi, successor to Patriarch Movsess as Catholicos of All Armenians, he left again for Etchmiadzin, where he met Padre Paolo Piromalli, a Roman monk, from whom he learned Latin, while he taught Padre Paolo Armenian. He then devoted himself to translating Latin books,
- During this time, Voskan must have been ordained into the celibate priesthood, and eventually a Vardapet (Doctor). However, the exact date of his ordination is unknown.
- 1650 Voskan was appointed Superior of the monastery of St. Sarkis in Oushi, where he performed works of reconstruction, and opened a school.
- 1655 HACOBI IV JOUGHAEZIAN became Catholicos Patriarch of All Armenians. He too was a student of Vardapet Khatchadour Kesaratzi and was very anxious to fulfill the desire of his teacher that the Holy Bible be printed in Armenian.
- 1656 To attain that end, Matheos Dzaretzi, a deacon and secretary of the Catholicossate, was sent to Europe.

In various towns he was confronted with the persecutions of Roman Catholic priests, but at long last he was able to reach Amsterdam, Holland, where he encountered great difficulties which, however, he overcame and was finally successful in opening the printing-house.

- 1660 The printing of the book Hisoos Vordi (Jesus the Son) of St. Nersess Shnorhali (the Graceful) was started. Matheos Dzaretzi fell critically ill and was near death. Also heavily burdened by debts, he wished to transfer the printing-house and the continuation of the work of printing into safe hands. He, therefore, asked Avedis Kelijentz, Voskan Vardapet's brother, who happened to be in Amsterdam at the time for business, to take over the job. According to a signed contract, Avedis owned the printing-house which was named "Holy Etchmiadzin and St. Sarkis the Captain".
- 1661 Matheos entered his eternal rest. Avedis paid the debts of the printing-house and, under his ownership, completed the printing of the book Hisoos Vordi, begun by Dzaretzi. Realizing, however, that "he was not sufficiently a literary man to carry on the work of printing" and that, additionally, he did not have the requisite experience, he wrote to his brother, Voskan Vardapet, to come to Amsterdam to assume the entire responsibility of the work. With this in mind, he also wrote to Catholicos-Patriarch of All Armenians at Holy Etchmiadzin.
- 1662 Ordaining him a bishop, Catholicos Hacob IV Joughaetzi sent Voskan Vardapet to Amsterdam. Voskan travelled through Smyrna and Italy trying particularly to secure the means with which to meet the vast expense of printing the Bible in Armenian.

He stayed in Italy for quite a long time travelling back and forth between Livorno and Rome, making applications on one hand to the authorities of the Roman Catholic Church and, on the other hand, trying

to approach the Armenian businessmen and convince them to provide funds for the printing of the Bible in Armenian.

The authorities of the Roman Catholic Church had a precondition for any help: the conversion of any applicant from Christ's Church to Roman Catholicism. On this special occasion, for a printing purpose, it was obligatory to go through the very strict rules of the Index of Prohibited Books of the Roman Catholic Church. Voskan Vardapet was not willing to sell the basic principles of the Armenian Church, and so Rome denied him any assistance.

However, Voskan Vardapet was carrying the spirit of St. Mesrob and, therefore, he would not give up hope and abandon the labor entrusted to his care.

Despite the fact that even the wealthy Armenian businessmen had first refused to help him, Voskan Vardapet continued his efforts and was finally successful in convincing three merchants, compatriots of his – Stephanos Khanentz, Theodoros Ketreshentz and Bedros Der Avakentz – to sign a contract assuming responsibility for all the expenses of the printing of the Holy Bible, provided “the net income from the sale of the books be appropriated to Etchmiadzin”, and partly also to the two monasteries: St. James in Jerusalem and St. Sarkis the Captain in Oushi.

1664 Voskan arrived in Amsterdam and went to work immediately. He had an assistant in the person of Vardapet Garabed Adriantzi, his student, who had left Etchmiadzin and arrived in Amsterdam before him. Garabed Vardapet had put the printing-house in order and had printed a Book of Psalms, after he had started printing a Book of Sharagans (hymns).

1665 Through the joint efforts of the Vardapets Voskan and Garabed, the Book of Hymns was completed, and two other books were also published: Aybenaran yev Kristoneagan (Elementary textbook for Armenian language

and Catechism) or Keraganootyoun (Grammar). These first printings were only experiments to prepare the way for attaining the real goal.

On March 11, 1666 – The first printing of the Holy Bible in Armenian was finally begun with modified new letters and ornate headings. The printing was completed on October 13, 1668.

It will suffice at this time to mention the opinions of two expert authors regarding the nature and artistic value of this publication of Voskan Vardapet.

The Armenian historian Leo says: “A great work indeed ...Voskan had worked over it for long time not only as a printer, but as editor ...It is a faultless printing, illustrated, beautiful, through which you may imagine Voskan’s great efforts and spiritual capabilities”. (“Etchmiadzin”, March 1966, p. 7).

And, according to Karekin Levonian, the printing of the Bible “is a splendid achievement in technical viewpoint and an unprecedented work until the Armenian printing of his time.” (“Etchmiadin”, March 1966, p. 7).

Together with the printing of the Holy Bible, Voskan Vardapet also published Armenian Religious, ecclesiastical and historical books, producing some 3-4 volumes per year, until the end of 1669.

1670 Overwhelmed by debts and also annoyed by religious denominational pressures from outside, Voskan Vardapet decided to move his printing-press to another country. He moved first to Livorno, Italy, and then, two years later, to Marseilles, France, with the permission of King Louis XIV and with the provision that the printed books “should not contain anything against the Roman Catholic religion and beliefs ...”.

Voskan Vardapet continued his work for the following three years, with a yearly publication of 6-7 volumes dealing with the Divine Services and rituals of the Armenian Church, trying to be faithful to our

national and religious traditions. However, he became a victim of the crafty accusations and slanders of so-called friends and associated ... who forced him even “into the civil and religious courts”. (Azkabadoum, II, p. 2544).

- 1674 The struggle waging between his conscience and the external pressures weighed heavily upon Voskan Vardapet's physical well-being, which was already very deteriorated. He died in the beginning of 1674.

The late Patriarch Malachia Ormanian writes about Voskan: “This saintly archbishop, working in the dust of the printing-house, became a real martyr for the single enterprise of printing, though it was very easy for him with such a noble origin and a high ecclesiastical rank, to live in glory and pleasures as his fellow clergymen did”. (Azkabadoum, II, p. 2544).

On August 1, 1680 – Catholicos Hacob IV, the other benefactor of the printing of the Holy Bible, died in Constantinople at the age of 82. He, too, was martyred in the course of his efforts to assuage the sorrows of his people and to secure a better future for them.

Again Patriarch Ormanian says of the Catholicos Hacob: “The people – who often measure their respect not so much with the view of great intellectuals, but rather with instances of felt kindness and purity, of honesty and piety – have borne a most powerful witness to their Patriarch-Catholicos and have regarded his grave as a holy sanctuary from the first days of his death” even celebrating Divine Liturgy thereupon ...

We also have the following related story: “A Well-known Moslem Turk was miraculously cured of paralysis through Pir Yacoub (Catholicos Hacob) and was serving his tomb. The custom of going on a pilgrimage to Hacob's grace is still continued to this day in honor of the Holy-Father”. (Azkabadoum, II, p. 2619) .

IV

THE CATHOLICOS HACOB IV AND VOSKAN VARDAPET

Both from the Holy See of Etchmiadzin ...

Two persons, superb and unforgettable ...

Two Great Benefactors of the first printing of the Bible in Armenian ...

Are resting in Gods' eternal light with their immortal spirits, for they sacrificed their lives "to establish the living word on earth" and "depending upon the hope of the immortal bridegroom, they made themselves worthy to the ineffable promise".

They also wholly deserve the ever-lasting gratitude and prayerful praise of the Armenian people.

May the Memory of the Righteous Be Blessed.

VERY REV. DIRAYR Dz. V. DERVISHIAN

Los Angeles, California, October 1966

Booklet No. 11

"TERCENTENARY

of the Printing of the First Armenian Bible"

Published by the Western Diocese

of the Armenian Church of North America

WHERE TO LOOK IN THE BIBLE

When

Desiring inward peace – *John 14; Romans 8.*

Everything is going well – *Psalms 33; 12-22; 100; I Timothy 6; James 2:1-17.*

Satisfied with yourself – *Proverbs 11; Luke 16.*

Seeking the best investment – *Matthew 7.*

Starting a new job – *Psalms 1; Proverbs 16; Philippians 3:7-21.*

You have been placed in a position of responsibility – *Joshua 1:1-9; Proverbs 2; II Corinthians 8:1-15.*

Making a new home – *Psalms 127; Proverbs 17; Ephesians 5; Colossians 3; I Peter 3:1-17; I John 4.*

You are out for a good time – *Matthew 15:1-20; II Corinthians 3; Galatians 5.*

Wanting to live successfully with your fellow men – *Romans 12.*

Anxious for dear ones – *Psalms 121; Luke 17.*

Business is poor – *Psalms 37, 92; Ecclesiastes 5.*

Discouraged – *Psalms 23, 42, 43.*

Everything seems going from bad to worse – *II Timothy 3; Hebrews 13.*

Friends seem to go back on you – *Matthew 5; I Corinthians 13.*

Sorrow overtakes you – *Psalms 46; Matthew 28.*

Tempted to do wrong – *Psalms 15, 19, 139; Matthew 4; James 1.*

Things look “blue” – *Psalms 34, 71; Isaiah 40.*

You seem too busy – *Ecclesiastes 3:1-15.*

You can’t go to sleep – *Psalms 4, 56, 130.*

You have quarreled – *Matthew 18; Ephesians 4; James 4.*

You are weary – *Psalms 95:1-7; Matthew 11.*

Worries oppress you – *Psalms 46; Matthew 6.*

If you

Are challenged by opposing forces – *Ephesians 6; Philippians 4.*
Are facing a crisis – *Job 28:12-28; Proverbs 8; Isaiah 55.*
Are jealous – *Psalms 49; James 3.*
Are impatient – *Psalms 40, 90; Hebrews 12.*
Are bereaved – *I Corinthians 15; I Thessalonians 4:13-5:28; Revelation 21, 22.*
Are bored – *I Kings 5; Job 38; Psalms 103, 104; Ephesians 3.*
Bear a grudge – *Luke 6; II Corinthians 4; Ephesians 4.*
Have experienced severe losses – *Colossians 1; I Peter 1.*
Have been disobedient – *Isaiah 6; Mark 12; Luke 5.*
Need forgiveness – *Matthew 23; Luke 15; Philemon.*
Are sick or in pain – *Psalms 6, 39, 41, 67; Isaiah 26.*

When you

Feel your faith is weak – *Psalms 126, 146; Hebrews 11.*
Think God seems far away – *Psalms 25, 125, 138; Luke 10.*
Are leaving home – *Psalms 119; Proverbs 3, 4.*
Are planning your budget – *Mark 4; Luke 19.*
Are becoming lax and indifferent – *Matthew 25; Revelation 3.*
Are lonely or fearful – *Psalms 27, 91; Luke 8; I Peter 4.*
Fear death – *John 11, 17, 20; II Corinthians 5; I John 3; Revelation 14.*
Have sinned – *Psalms 51; Isaiah 53; John 3; I John 1.*
Want to know the way of prayer – *I Kings 8:12-61; Luke 11, 18.*
Want a worshipful mood – *Psalms 24, 84, 116; Isaiah 1:10-20; John 4:1-45.*
Are concerned with God in national life – *Deuteronomy 8; Psalms 85, 118, 124; Isaiah 41:8-20; Micah 4, 6:6-16.*

To find

The Ten Commandments – *Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5.*
The Shepherd Psalm – *Psalms 23.*
The Birth of Jesus – *Matthew 1, 2; Luke 2.*
The Beatitudes – *Matthew 5:1-12.*

The Lord's Prayer – *Matthew 6:5-15; Luke 11:1-13.*
The Sermon on the Mount – *Matthew 5, 6, 7.*
The Great Commandments – *Matthew 22:34-40.*
The Great Commission – *Matthew 28:16-20.*
The Parable of the Good Samaritan – *Luke 10.*
The Parable of the Prodigal Son – *Luke 15.*
The Parable of the Sower – *Matthew 13; Mark 4; Luke 8.*
The Last Judgment – *Matthew 25.*
The Crucifixion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus – *Matthew 26, 27, 28; Mark 14, 15, 16; Luke 22, 23, 24; John chapters 13 to 21.*
The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit – *Acts 2.*

“Religious Study Course of St. Nersess Armenian
Theological School”, (1964-1965, pp. 12-15)

ARMENIANS IN THE FAR EAST

For about two years we have been visiting those countries in the Far East and Africa – Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Burma, Thailand, Malaya, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippine Islands, Hong Kong, Macau, Japan, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, and the Sudan – where for many centuries the Armenians have been living. Some of these countries had Armenian communities beginning the fifteenth century; in some they have settled recently. The history of the Armenians, in some of these countries has already been written, but the history of some is still unknown. We could not visit only the Armenians who are still staying in China; but while we were in Sydney and Hong Kong we gathered much information about them from those Armenians who had previously lived in Harbin and Shanghai. Some of these countries, no Armenian clergyman had ever visited.

During our visit to these remnants of Armenians, we not only performed our religious duty by preaching, lecturing, and conducting services, but we spent most of our time in investigating their history and collating material. We gathered valuable information from Armenians who are at present living in the Far East and Africa. We came in contact with many scholars who have devoted their time to the study of the history of Far Eastern countries; of these some have interesting material about the Armenians. We probed through libraries and museums which could shed some light on the Armenians. We scanned the records of Armenians, Anglican and Roman Catholic churches, educational institutions, and government offices which contained information about the Armenians. We copied with great care, about three thousand inscriptions of Armenian tombs of forlorn cemeteries buried under dust and bushes, and also the inscriptions of churches and ecclesiastical vessels and vestments.

We did all these alone, with much ado and hardship, even endangering our health. If any clergyman or layman would have done this job before 1940, he would have collated more

material, because during the Second World War at the time of the Japanese invasion, nearly all the Armenian records in Rangoon, Singapore, Jakarta, and Hong Kong were destroyed. Unfortunately, through negligence or perhaps ignorance, some of the records of the Armenian churches in India have also been lost or destroyed.

We are planning to write soon and publish the history of the Armenians in the Far East and Africa. It will be composed of three big volumes, each volume one thousand pages. The first two volumes will include the history of the Armenians in the Far East; the third one, that of Africa. The entire work will contain about one thousand illustrations. This voluminous work will be very useful and interesting because, before the advent of the Europeans to the Far East, the Armenians had been there already and had won fame in government, military, commercial and naval circles. Here it would suffice to mention just a few outstanding luminaries. An Armenian merchant, Thomas Cana, came to the Malabar coast in A.D. 780, that is, seven centuries before the landing of Vasco de Gama. He amassed tremendous wealth by trading in muslins and spices, and found great favor in the eyes of the native rulers. In the tenth century, before the Mohammedan invasion, there were Armenians in several principal commercial centers of India engaged in commerce.

In the sixteenth century, in the days of the Mogul emperors, the Armenians flourished in Agra, and also established themselves in all the great commercial cities of India. Khojah Phanous Calender, Khojah Petrus Wosken, Agha Shameer, Agha Catchick Arakiel were opulent merchants; Apcar & Co., Thaddeus Arathoon, Alexander Apcar were ship-owners, jute mill owners, and colliery proprietors; Mirza Zul Quarnain was the Emir of the Mogul court and governor of important provinces. Gorgin Khan was the commander-in-chief of the Nawab of Bengal; Khojah Israel Sarhad and Peter Arathoon were eminent diplomats; Shah Nazar Khan was manufacturer of ordinance; Sarmad was a renowned poet who died in Delhi. With the same fame and distinction, Armenians

carried on trade and rose to prominent positions in other Far Eastern countries too – Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, and Hong Kong. The Armenian foreign ministers, town governors, collectors of customs, sea captains, military leaders, and other government officials in the Burmese Court played a decisive part in Burma. The greatest hotels in these countries belonged to the Armenians. In Indonesia, besides outstanding hotels, they owned many sugar and rubber factories.

The greatest citizen which Hong Kong has ever had was an Armenian, Sir Catchick Paul Chater, an eminent merchant, the contriver and the executioner of the reclamation project, a great leader in administration, the head of all shipping, banking, and international companies; truly called “the father of everything in Hong Kong”.

In the Dark Middle Ages the Armenians preached Christianity in Central Africa. They had their own church until the Middle of nineteenth century, in Kabul. An Armenian woman became the wife of Azim Khan, the Emir of Afghanistan. An Armenian, Lucas A. Joseph, was the manager of Emir’s gunpowder factories in Jelalabad, and also the governor of that province.

Noted enterprises and activities were also carried on by the Armenians living in Ethiopia. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Helena, the Queen of Ethiopia determined to appeal for help to the king of Portugal. She chose for her envoy an Armenian merchant called Matthew. In the seventh century, the Armenian monks founded a monastery in Ethiopia and named it HAYK. The monastery was destroyed in 1527.

For centuries the Armenians in the Far East have been tenaciously and zealously attached to their mother church, which they consider as the anchor of their existence and salvation. Among them one does not find any other institution, whether religious or political, except the Church of Armenia. In the fourteenth century, the Armenians who were trading in China established two churches, which they gave to the Roman Catholics when their number was greatly diminished. Through the moral support and financial help of Mirza Zul

Quarnain, the Jesuit fathers were able to carry on their missionary work in India. The oldest Christian churches in Agra (562), Calcutta (1707), and Singapore (1835) were built by the Armenians. The translation of the Scriptures into Chinese was commenced in Calcutta, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, by an Armenian, named Lassar, born in Macao. The wife of the famous Mogul Emperor, Akbar the Great, was an Armenian, Mariam Zamani Begum, whose beautiful palace is still one of the greatest attractions for the visitors at Fatihpur Sikri, in India.

We jotted down these few lines about the Armenians in the Far East, in order to show how interesting and important their history is. We forgot to mention that the first two volumes of our work will also contain a short history of the Orthodox Malabar Church in South India, to which we paid a visit during our sojourn in India. This Church has the same Creed and Doctrine as the Armenian Church.

After the Second World War, some Armenians living in India, Pakistan, Burma, Singapore, Indonesia, Japan and China, settled in Australia, the U.S.A., England and Holland.

BISHOP TERENCE POLADIAN

“The Armenian Guardian” July-August 1959

ARMENIAN MUSIC

It is not easy to discuss Armenian music considering the paucity of source of material and the special abilities needed to understand and to explain the music of a people.

Accordingly, my paper is merely an exploration into that which is ours and which has been ours for centuries. Armenian music has come to us after many centuries, sometimes weak, sometimes proud, sometimes imaginative, and sometimes somewhat strange; but it has come to us, and it is our duty to convey it to later generations.

We shall refer from time to time to pre-Christian, religious, folk, and troubadouric music. It would, of course, be helpful and more illustrative if it were possible for us to give examples; but, unfortunately, it will not be possible here.

Music is universal language. We are able to express thoughts and feelings through it. Not only is this language universal, it is also eternal. Throughout the centuries, man has had the instinct for understanding music and thus has shared the composer's purpose and expression.

Period before Armenian Literature

This period covers the pre-Christian centuries of Armenian civilization as well as the period after Christ up to the fifth century; that is, the time of the discovery of the Armenian alphabet. We know that before this time the Armenians had only an oral literature, primarily of the following two kinds:

- a. Mythological
- b. Heroic or Epic

Unfortunately, only bits of these, of which we shall speak later, have come down to us.

Moses of Khoren, the father of Armenian history, has gathered all these, annotating them and transcribing them for later generations.

In addition to the mythology, there were the songs sung at wedding festivities and on sorrowful occasions. All these

had such a deep influence on the Armenian mind that according to the historian Yeghishe, Vasac (fifth century) would try to understand the Christian beliefs whose roots were taking hold on Armenian soil through the thoughts and emotions of the songs. During the eleventh century, furthermore, at the time of Grigor Magistros, there were still echoes of pre-Christian songs because of tradition, and at time of merriment during the period of Navasard. We know this because Grigor has collected all of this information in his books.

We mentioned the novelists who would usually be compared to the Greek minstrels or the Celtic bards. The latter would praise the heroic deeds of the gods, they would incite wars, and often they would sing and present plays at royal gatherings and feasts, in England, Ireland, and Scotland. But our Goghtan singers are better remembered, for they have kept a tradition alive and handed down to us all of the fables and stories of Artashes the Greek. Here are a few of those themes that have interested these singers.

- a. The story of Shamiram and Ara the Handsome (about family love and family morality)
- b. Tork the Ugly Giant (made a god for his bravery)
- c. Slak and Mehendac (about hunting skill)
- d. Vahakn (god of fire, known as the dragon killer)
- e. A few lines about Vardges of Cappadocia (sixth century B.C.)
- f. About Tigran Yervandian
- g. The mysterious fable about Azhdahac
- h. The story of Artashes and Artavazd
- i. Tigran the Great's achievements
- j. The legend of Haig the Patriarch and Bel

We hasten to add that though these legends have no true historical value, they do give us a picture of our early history. This is so much so that sometimes it is difficult to distinguish the fact from fancy. Be that as it may, there is a definite grace in description and literary beauty.

Post-Christian Period

The Armenian music in the post-Christian period, after the discovery of Armenian alphabet, may be classified into two groups:

- a. Religious
- b. Secular

The religious music has had far-reaching effects, but unfortunately it is unfamiliar to most of our people. Let us, therefore, examine it.

In our church history the twelfth century is the Silver Age of Literature and also the age of our sharacans. The themes of sharacans are numerous: all phases of the life of Christ, the Christ-Mother, the Saints, the kings, the virgins, the hermits, the patriarchs, the Lenten period, penitence, and many other persons and ideas. What are sharacans? They are spiritual songs by various persons, sometimes in free verse and sometimes in special patterns. It is possible to identify the early sharacans by observing that they have the form and content of Psalms; that is, they are somewhat irregular like the Goghtan songs, written to be chanted and not read. Sharacans have literary value; though spiritual poetry, they do not lack vivaciousness and an awe-inspiring spirit. The sharacan is the adornment in the Armenian Church. To the faithful they provide inspiration and spiritual nourishment, and at the same time, as songs, they are magnificent works of Armenian music.

The word sharacan came into use in the twelfth century. It comes probably from the Arabic word for poetry, hence justifying the meaning “poetical writing”.

It has been said many times that the great Patriarch, St. Nerses the Graceful, was the one who enriched our sharacan, which was brought into the present state in the fourteenth century during the time of Catholicos Komitas.

It should be said in passing that our music and arts, just as literature, history, etc., were originated in the monasteries, (Camrtjatzor, Klatzor, Tathev, for example).

Tone symbols called neumes (khaz) are used to indicate the way of singing sharacans. The Greeks used such neumes, and there were a guide for the Armenians at the beginning. In the seventh and eighth centuries, sharacans were written on the tetra chord system.

The Armenians and the Greeks used the neumes up until the eighteenth century. However, when the skill in their use was lost, that is, there were none left who could use it, Baba Hambartzoum, in the nineteenth century gave them new meanings, starting the scale on D instead of on C. It was about that time that Catholicos Kevork IV called Nigoghayos Tashjian to Etchmiadzin in order to have all sharacans recorded in these notes. This is the book Macar Ecmalian used to set the sharacans to European musical notation. Ecmalian was the first, therefore, to set this single-voiced music on the chord system, which however, regarded artistically, does not represent true Armenian art, but rather the influence of Byzantine, Russian, and European Art.

Before going on to the works and importance of Komitas Vardapet, it is well to say that our sharacans are written on eight tones; that is, on eight different motifs. Once you have become familiar with these and master them, it will be easy to sing the church sharacans.

Not only in church music, but also in folk music Komitas made fundamental contributions. Perhaps it would not be wrong to say that Komitas was the motivating force that made Armenian music into a regular and complete entity. Our music took on a new voice and a new tongue with Komitas. He terminated solo voice singing in such a manner as to retain the independence of the several voices in polyphonic singing.

His liturgy, published under the editorship of his pupil, Vardan Sarxian, is not only beautiful, not only genuinely expressive of Christ's great sacrifice, but it allows the faithful to participate in the Great Mystery. Komitas' liturgy is a masterpiece.

It is appropriate to examine his secular music. Komitas spent twenty-five years in collating and setting down Armenian music. He produced a work of such beauty as to be unmatched by anyone before or since. Being familiar with all phases of Russian and European music, and having the love and appreciation of his people's cultural wealth, covered with the dust of centuries, he began to extract the treasure, improving it, beautifying it, cultivating it, and returning it to the people.

His style is basically simple and understandable. He has mastered the art of laconic expression, a pre-requisite to simplicity, whereby he conveys the feeling and meaning of his mind, his soul, and his heart. Each note has its force; not one is excessive. Everything is weighed and measured. With all the brevity, he has never failed to show color, shading, and contrast in his creation.

Fundamentally, Komitas is a CONSERVATIVE composer in that he has never changed the character of the folk music. Instead, sensing the circumstance and the theme of the music he has given it a new form and a new Armenian expression.

It is perhaps at this point that we should reflect upon that subject that often confronts us: "Is our music EASTERN or WESTERN?"

Komitas Vardapet himself says, "...Our music too, with its national spirit and style, is as much Eastern as the Perso-Arabian; but neither is the Perso-Arabian ours nor ours a part of theirs. The difference between our music and other Eastern music is that in the other music a tetra chord is successively augmented and diminished while we take a simple tetra chord and divide the intervals into half-tones. Persian, Turkish, and Arab music use impractical and senseless third tones and quarter tones."

If we seek the European major and minor scales in our music, we would not find them, says the Master, Komitas. But we can draw the following conclusion, as the master himself has, that Armenian music has two important branches, Western and Eastern.

In the first, the melodies are broad and complex, rich and imposing, bright and energetic. In the second, they are confined and simple, indigenous and light, feeble and calm. But the softness found in Arabic and Turkish music is never to be found in the Armenian.

You have heard, and you may have said yourself, that Armenian music is melancholy and repetitious. Such a judgment is far from valid, for though it is true that music seems often sad, it is noble and never forlorn. In it there is always the veiled smile. Sometimes in it there is the tempest, the fire, or the murmur.

To recognize these and other magnificent qualities of Armenian music, the reader must first know how to sing it well, otherwise even the joyous song becomes pitiful, when shouted or bellowed. These are not inherent characteristics of Armenian music or of the Armenian folk singer, instead, "the rustic Armenian sings proudly, brightly, and warmly," says Vardan Sarxian, continuing, "rich and independent when sung before men, pure and cristal clear when sung before his dancing partner; he avoids mouthy and throaty tones, but is gently nasal and tremulant like a bell".

Take any of the great master's songs; there you will certainly find flowing, tremulous harmony speaking to your heart and soul. And as the years pass, its meaning, its depths, and its acceptance grow. These songs are sung and imitated because they represent the true Armenian character.

In passing we mentioned the style and beauty of Komitas' liturgy. We say here, too, that he used counterpoint in folk music. As a consequence, there is more color, a characteristic grace, and perfection of the pattern. The earth, the wind, the water, the wanderer and the countless ideas found new meaning and gained a new light and character under his pen. We read that during the years 1911-1915 he gathered, edited, and harmonized more than 3,500 songs.

It would be worth telling about the numerous musician-composers who from early times have enriched our musical literature, but then we would have to refer also to their

works. Instead, let us only list the most important ones, already familiar to us:

Alexander Spendiarian (1871-1929, Erevan)

Romanos Melikian (1881-1935, Tiflis)

Grigor Siuni (Mirzoyan) (1857-1938)

Spiridon Melikian (1880-1933, Pupil of Komitas)

Aram Khachaturian and Haro Stephanian (Among the greatest of Armenia) P. Ganachian and Vardan Sarxian (Pupils of Komitas)

Let us go on to the minstrels, who may be considered somewhat less brilliant miniature copies of our Goghtan singers, and who lived and performed mainly in the 18th and 19th centuries in the royal courts of Armenia and in neighboring countries. These “ashoughs” are troubadours. These are the people who have blended together musical composition and narration; they lived busying themselves with themes of victory, of pleasure, of beauty, of love, traveling from city to city, spreading the feeling of unity among the people.

No doubt they began to exist as early as the 15th century, but it is not until the 18th century that we find the great ones. The wine-singer, Ashough Tatour of Garin, and the flower-singer, Ashough David, are the first to claim our attention. They have not become as famous as Sayat-Nova (Harouthiun Sayatian, 1712-1795), who was killed while he was praying in a church.

The instrument of the Ashoughs was the kamancha, a musical instrument like the violin, played with a bow, but resting on the lap.

Other ashoughs are Ashough Tjivani (Serob Levonian, 1846-1909) who died lonely and hungry in Tiflis; and Ashough Sheram (Grigor Talian, 1857-1938) who died in Armenia.

Perhaps these three are our greatest ashoughs. Their style and their themes are nearly the same. They sang and accompanied themselves in a single melody line, and the blend of the voice and the instrument had an emotional appeal on their listeners. Their songs are sung today in Armenia and elsewhere, during times of merriment and on other occasions.

There came a sudden end to Armenian ashoughs in the 19th century, first in their works, and then in their very existence, no doubt because of the new spread of literacy and education among our people.

It should be added that as long as the ashoughs remained in Armenia their compositions bore an Armenian stamp and style, but as soon as they went abroad and began to compose similar songs in other tongues for others in other environments, their Armenianism faded and their songs written in foreign countries show that foreign influence.

In summarizing, we would like to emphasize the fact that Armenian folk music is one of those factors that have kept the Armenian quality and style quite alive and free of interferences. The reason may be that its songs are one of the closest things to the heart of the Armenian people.

The wealth of our country, its physical appearance, its mountainous character, have had a distinct effect on our music. It is the power and beauty that produce the proud songs and dances to impress the listeners. The love songs are not so audacious, considering the gentleness for the theme, nor as feeble as the Arabic or Turkish love songs. Lullaby songs and songs about animals are very gentle.

Here were a few pages about Armenian music! I hope that after this it will be easy for you to distinguish between truly Armenian songs and the so-called Armenian songs and dances that, especially in recent years, have spread throughout America so rapidly. Those songs are so removed from being Armenian as the sun is from the earth. We need to undertake a crusade to ensure that our truly Armenian songs will be preserved and protected.

REV. SHAHE ALTOUNIAN

“The Digest”

Association of Armenian Church Choirs of America

Diocese of the Armenian Church of America

1955-1956, Volume III

NAVASSARD AND VARDAVAR

(The New Year's Day in Pagan Armenia)

On a hot day of July, the writer, walking down the street in his home town, received a bucketful of water on his head. Since it was Sunday and the feast of Transfiguration, he knew that the occurrence was not an accident. It took him several years to find out that an ancient Indian goddess was responsible for the refreshing and yet not-too-pleasant experience.

Next year (1953) the Armenians will celebrate the Transfiguration of Christ on the twelfth of July. Another popular name for the Sunday on which this feast occurs is Var-davar. During the festivities of Vardavar it is customary for Armenians to throw water at each other. How this practice developed? To find the answer we must go back more than two thousand years, to a time when Armenia was not as yet a Christian country.

Substitution of Christian for Pagan Feasts

Customs are of course established for certain reasons. But as time passes by the reasons are lost sight of and the practices, having become a habit, remain. The citizens of the Roman Empire were in the habit of celebrating Mithra, a sun god, on the 25th December. After the Christianization of the Empire they continued the same things on the same day of the year not in memory of Mithra any longer, but in celebration of the Birth of Christ.

To substitute Christian feasts for pagan ones was a common practice of the early Church. In Armenia the Transfiguration of Christ substituted Vardavar.

Vardavar means literally, "flamboyant with roses" (vard, rose; var, varel, to shine forth).[§] It used to occur in the beginning

[§] A correction: Vardavar means, literally "decorated with roses" (vard, rose; varel to decorate, in Grabar – classical Armenian)

of summer at which time flowers were abundant. It was also at this time that the new year began in Armenia. The season was called Navassard from the Persian Nava (new) Serhata (year). Navassard was our “January”.

Navassard and an Indian Goddess

We may go further back and trace the origin of the Persian Nava Serhata to a Hindu feast, the Nava-Sarata, which is the Feast of New Waters. As a matter of fact the Hindus had a goddess by the name of Sarata. She was the protectress of springs and rivers; also of eloquence. It is significant, in this connection, that even in ordinary conversation the ease and the effectiveness of a speech is compared by many Easterners to the flowing of a river.

The Residence of the Armenian God of Hospitality

On long weekends people go to big cities. Pagan Armenians used to do the same thing. However, only a few cities had facilities to accommodate great numbers of tourists. Bacavan was one of these. Bacavan (from Bacchus and avan, town) is the equivalent of the Greek word Theopolis (town of god). Bacavan was a city of the province of Bacrevand and it was famous with its temple dedicated to Vanatour (from van, house; tour, tal, to give). The Armenian god Vanatour thus corresponds to the Roman god Hospitalis who is, as the name indicates, the god of hospitality.

Bacavan where the residence of the god of hospitality was erected had, as to be expected, many hotels. Hotel management was the main business in Bacavan. There is nothing astonishing about this circumstance since the builders and managers of hotels would be serving not only Vanatour, their god of hospitality, but also themselves. Particularly during the first days of Navassard (“January”) they should make good money.

“Cabins” Along the Roads

Armenia is a mountainous country and its roads were not only rough but also quite hazardous. Travelers needed both rest and protection. “Cabins” or “motels” built along the roads, being dedicated to the gods of hospitality, would serve both purposes (of rest and protection). These havens were not referred to as cabins, of course. People called the butkas. This is a Persian term meaning “dwelling or house of idol” from which the English word pagoda (Far Eastern temple) is derived.

Our forefathers were sensible enough to realize that one god, Vanatour, was not enough to take care of the protection of all these tourists and travelers. Consequently the job was assigned to a host of gods. They were called Tik Vanatri (gods of – i.e., under the jurisdiction – Vanatour). All the havens along the roads were dedicated to these gods.

The practice of building these cabins was very useful to people. They would travel more freely and that would contribute to the economy of the country. Further, it was a direct help to the travelers themselves. And although Vanatour was discarded after Armenians embraced the true faith, there was no reason why the havens themselves should be demolished. As a matter of fact Saint Nersess the Great built even more of them.

Vanatour and Amanor

There are indications that during the first days of Navassard, on the occasion of Vardavar, people would offer sacrifices not only to the Tik Vanatri, but also to the Tik Amanora (gods of Amanor). Amanor, now used as a common noun, means New Year (am, year; nor, new). It is possible that Vanatour and Amanor were thought of as bridegroom and bride, and they symbolized and caused, together, the fertility of the lands of Armenia. This is to be surmised from the fact

that the period of the blossoming forth of flowers corresponded to the beginning of the new year.

At the beginning of Navassard, on the occasion of Vardavar, people would go, as we said, to Bacavan for religious reasons, no doubt, but also for relaxation and good time.

What did they do?

Flowers, Doves and Water

There were at least three things that they used widely in their festivities: flowers, doves and water. The word itself means, as we saw, “flamboyant with roses” (correctly meaning “decorated with roses” – Ed.). The rose is the queen of flowers and it is to be inferred from the name Vardavar that during the New Year’s celebrations the temples of Bacavan, as well as other prominent buildings and places were lavishly decorated with flowers. This was done not only for purposes of adornment but also, indeed mainly out of devotion. The flowers were offered to the gods as signs of recognition of their bounty.

Doves were used for augury. They were flown around and from their flight the future could be foretold. Specialists could infer, from the way these birds flew, whether the new year would be a good or bad one.

The squares of the city would be full of birds. People practicing augury would sit at convenient places and, upon being paid, would let a number of feathered creatures go into the air to study, for the benefit of the customer, their movements in the spaces above. Of course they were usually charlatans. For this reason and for its pagan connotations people who raise birds, particularly doves, are not looked upon as honorable citizens by the Armenians of the East, now.

And there was water. This being a sign of renewal and cleanliness, to sprinkle a friend with water was a way of wishing him a happy new year.

Water has also been considered from very ancient times the birth-giving, creative element. The first Greek philosopher thought that everything was made of this element.

The use of water during the Vardavar (Transfiguration) festivities is not too popular, now. However, not too long ago the writer received a bucketful of it on his head while walking down the street, on that hot day of July, in his Eastern home town. Refreshing, you would think. But I was a child and wearing brand new clothes.

DRTAD KRIKORIAN

“The Armenian Guardian” January 1953

THE FEASTS OF THE HOLY VIRGIN ACCORDING TO THE CALENDAR OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

Nativity of Christ – Jan. 6:

The Birth of Christ cannot be considered without the motherhood of the Holy Virgin. During the great feast there are many allusions and praises directed to the Mother of God. (Luke 2:1-20)

Presentation of the Lord – Feb. 14:

The Jewish law ordered that the first-born son should be offered to God, and after its presentation, the child should be ransomed with a certain sum of money, and peculiar sacrifices offered on the occasion. On the 40th day after the Birth, the Holy Virgin took Him to the temple. (Luke 2:22-38)

Annunciation – April 7:

This festival takes its name from the happy tidings brought by the angel Gabriel to the Holy Virgin, concerning the Incarnation of the Son of God. (Luke 1:26-38)

Assumption (closest Sunday to August 15):

This is one of the five Great Feasts or Daghavar of the Armenian Church and is greatest of all the festivals which the Church celebrates in her honor. On this day the Church commemorates the happy departure from life of the Holy Virgin Mary, and her transition into the Kingdom of her Son, in which she received from Him a throne above all the other saints and heavenly spirits. Grapes are blessed on this day because the Holy Virgin has been likened to a Vine and her fruit Jesus said about Himself, “This wine is my Blood”.

Conception of the Virgin Mary – Dec. 9:

This has lately been introduced in our Calendar.

Nativity of the Virgin Mary – Sept. 8:

According to tradition her parents were Joachim and Anna, from the house of David. We do not know the place of the date of her birth; probably she was born in Bethlehem or Nazareth about 17 or 18 years before the Birth of Christ.

Presentation – Nov. 21:

It is an ancient tradition that the Holy Virgin Mary was solemnly offered to God in the Temple in her infancy, to be lodged in apartments belonging to the Temple, and brought up in attending the priests and Levites in the sacred ministry.

Discovery of the Jewelry Box –

In 1774, Catholicos Simeon included this feast in the Calendar to be celebrated on the fifth Sunday after Pentecost. A miraculous box was found in Jerusalem believed to belong to the Holy Virgin. It was taken to Constantinople in reverence to the Emperor Leo (457-473). Because of the Assumption of the Holy Virgin, articles belonging to her were kept reverently.

Discovery of the Belt –

In 1774, Catholicos Simeon included this feast in the Calendar to be celebrated on the third Sunday of the Assumption.

The last two are mere occasions to celebrate her blessed memory.

ARNAK KAHANA KASPARIAN

“The Digest”, Vol. IV, 1957-1958, pp. 42-44

THE FEASTS OF THE VIRGIN MARY IN VARIOUS CHURCH CALENDARS

	<u>Armenian</u>	<u>Greek</u>	<u>Roman</u>	<u>Episcopal</u>
<i>Christmas – Theophany</i>				
	Jan. 6	Dec. 25	Dec. 25	Dec. 25
<i>Presentation of the Lord</i>				
	Feb. 14	Feb. 2	Feb. 2	Feb. 2
		Purification (Candlemasday)		
<i>Annunciation</i>				
	Apr. 7	Mar. 25	Mar. 25	Mar. 25
<i>Assumption</i>				
	Closest Sun. to Aug. 15	Aug. 15	Aug. 15	Aug. 15
<i>Conception</i>				
	Dec. 9	Dec. 9	Dec. 8 (Immaculate Conception since 1854)	---
<i>Nativity</i>				
	Sept. 8	Sept. 8	Sept. 8	---
<i>Presentation</i>				
	Nov. 21	Nov. 21	Nov. 21	---
<i>Discovery of Jewelry Box</i>				
	Fifth Sun. after Pentecost	July 2 (According to Ormanian)	July 2 (Visitation to Elizabeth)	
<i>Discovery of Belt</i>				
	Third Sun. after Assumption	Aug. 31 (According to Ormanian)	---	---
<i>Most Holy Mother of God</i>				
	---	Dec. 26	Maternity Oct. 11 (since 1931)	---

In addition, the Roman Church has the following: Our Lady of Nives (Aug. 5), Our Lady of Mount Carmel (July 16), Our Lady of Mercy (Sept. 24) and Immaculate Heart (Aug. 22).

ARNAK KAHANA KASPARIAN

“The Digest”, Vol. IV, 1957-1958, pp. 42-44

THE PLACE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY IN THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

An ACYOA member was telling a University professor, who lived next door, about the Blessed Mother. The professor scoffed at the boy, saying: “But there is no difference between her and my mother”. The boy answered: “That is what you say, but there is a heck of a lot of difference between the sons.”

Our Lord is so different from other sons that we set His Mother apart from all mothers. My task today is to show how different she is as the Mother of the Son of God, and to clarify “The place of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Armenian Church.”

For a discussion of this sort I should have under my disposition some books or articles written by some theologians or doctors of the Armenian Church. Unfortunately, I didn’t have any sourcebook like that and presently I am not aware of the existence of such studies. In order to prepare this talk I went to our Church Calendar, found out all the occasions when we honor the Blessed Mother, read all the shargans and prayers dedicated or addressed to her. These are more important and basic sources than the writings of theologians, because in worship we express the faith of our Church more fully and faithfully than the academic treaties. Finally, I have made some comparisons of attitudes among the three major groups of Christendom, that is the Orthodox Church, the Roman Church, and the Protestant Church.

I. Feasts dedicated to the Holy Virgin

By consulting the Calendar I have found that on NINE occasions during the year, we commemorate the Holy Virgin Mary. On a separate sheet I have prepared a chart of the feasts according to the calendars of the Armenian, Greek, Roman and Episcopalian Churches, mentioning the occasions and the dates of the feasts.

II. Who is the Virgin?

She is the mother of our Lord. There is no person perhaps in sacred or secular history around whom so many legends have been grouped as the Virgin Mary; and there are few whose authentic history is more concise. She was, like Joseph, of the tribe of Judah and of the lineage of David. She was connected by marriage with Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. This is all that we know of her antecedents. We don't know the place or the date of her birth. Probably she was born in Bethlehem or Nazareth about 17 or 18 years before the Birth of Christ. According to tradition her parents were Joachim and Anna, who offered to God their only child, presenting her to the Temple in her infancy.

She was betrothed to Joseph of Nazareth, but before her marriage she became with child by the Holy Spirit, and became the mother of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. Her history at this time (her residence at Bethlehem, flight to Egypt, and return to her early home at Nazareth) are well known. Four times only does she appear after the commencement of Christ's ministry. These four occasions are:

1. The marriage at Cana in Galilee took place in the three months which intervened between the baptism of Christ and the Passover of the year 27. Mary was present and witnessed the first miracle performed by Christ, when he turned the water into wine. She had probably become a widow before this time.

2. The next time that she is brought before us we find her at Capernaum, where with her relatives, they sought an audience with our Lord, which was not granted, as he refused to admit any authority on the part of his relatives, or any privilege on account of their relationship.

3. Next the scene in Mary's life brings us to the foot of the cross. With almost his last words Christ commended his mother to the care of him who had borne the name of the disciple whom Jesus loved: "Woman, behold thy son." And from that hour, St. John assures us that he took her to his

own abode. So far as Mary is portrayed to us in Holy Scripture, she is, as we should have expected, the most tender, the most faithful, humble, patient and loving of women.

4. In the days succeeding the ascension of Christ, Mary met with the disciples in the upper room, waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit with power.

There is nothing in the Holy Scripture concerning Mary's departure from this world. Again according to tradition she did not die but fell asleep or reposed and she was taken up, body and soul, into heaven.

Those Christian fellowships that construct and base the whole structure of their faith only on what is written in the Bible cannot see the special honor and praise rendered to the mother of our Lord. The place of Mary in Christian thought and devotion is based on the meaning of her unique position as the human mother of Incarnate God, rather than upon the New Testament. The references in the New Testament as we have seen, to the Holy Virgin are few and their information slight.

With the development of the devotion of the saints, devotion to Mary held a first place. This devotion was enhanced by the decision of the Council of Ephesus (431) which centered its attention on the question raised by the Nestorians. Nestorius questioned the unity and relationship of the human and divine natures of Christ and he used the term Christotokos emphasizing the idea that he who was born of Mary was not God. The decision was in favor of St. Cyril's term, Theotokos, which, contrary to Nestorius emphasized the idea that he who was born of Mary was God. (Theotokos literally means God-bearer, Asdvadzadzin, and thus is less liable to misunderstanding than Mother of God or asdvadzamayr).

III. The unique role of Asdvadzadzin in God's plan

God created man in His own image and put him in the Garden. Man disobeyed God. Adam himself wanted to be god, independent and self-sufficient. A chasm was created

between God and man. This situation was not pleasant to God who had three alternatives:

1. To take away the freedom and make a puppet out of man. This He wouldn't do because that would destroy completely the dignity of man and the image of God in man.

2. To destroy His creation and make a fresh start.

3. To recreate man in a New Adam or new generation.

He chose the latter. In order to do this God from His eternity should enter into time and space. God decided to send His Second Person, the Son of God or the Word to be born as the Son of Man. And here comes the role of Mary, the person with highest Divine Mission.

The two masterpieces of God are Creation of man, and Recreation or Redemption of man. Creation was made for unfallen men; His mystical Body, for fallen men. Before making man, God made a garden of delights – as God alone knows how to make a garden beautiful. In that Paradise of Creation the first nuptials of man and woman was celebrated. But man willed not to have blessings, except according to his lower nature. Not only did he lose his happiness, he even wounded his own mind and will. Then God planned the re-making or redeeming of man. But before doing so, He would make another Garden. This new one would not be of earth, but of flesh; it would be a Garden over whose portals the name of sin would never be written – a Garden in which there would grow no weeds of rebellion to choke the growth of the flowers of grace. As Eden was the Paradise of Creation, Mary is the Paradise of the Incarnation, and in her as a Garden was celebrated the first nuptials of God and man. The closer to God, the greater to purity. But since no one was ever closer to God than the woman whose human portals He threw open to walk this earth, then no one could have been more pure than she.

His mother was not like ours, whom we accept as something historically fixed, which we could not exchange; He was born of a Mother whom He chose before He was born. It is the only instance in history where both the Son

willed the Mother, and the Mother willed the Son. And this is what the Creed means when it says, “born of the Virgin Mary”. She was called by God as Aaron was, and Our Lord was not just of her flesh, but by her consent.

“O thou pure Virgin Mary, who wast chosen from the beginning to be the holy temple of the ineffable light, which is of the Father; intercede for Him always to save us.”

Before taking unto Himself a human nature, God consulted with the woman, to ask her if she would give Him a man. The Manhood of Jesus was not stolen from humanity, as Prometheus stole fire from heaven; it was given as a gift.

The first man, Adam, was made from the slime of the earth. The first woman was made from a man in ecstasy. The new Adam, Christ, comes from the new Eve, Mary, in an ecstasy of prayer and love of God and the fullness of freedom.

IV. The Virgin Mary

A woman can be a virgin in one of three ways: first, because she never had a chance to marry. This could be involuntary virginity. No one is saved because of virginity alone – of the ten virgins in the Gospel, five were foolish women. There are virgins in hell. A woman can be a virgin a second way – because she decided not to marry. This can be for social or economic reasons and, therefore, may have no religious value, but it can also be meritorious, if it is done for a religious motive – for example, the better to serve a sick member of a family, or to dedicate oneself to community for the love of God. Thirdly, a woman can be a virgin because she made a vow or a promise to God to keep herself pure for His sake, although she has a hundred chances to marry.

Mary was a virgin in the third way. She fell in love at a very early age, and it was with God – one of those beautiful loves where the first love is the last love, and the last love is Eternal Love. This vow of virginity explains why Mary was troubled when the angel Gabriel announced to her, “Thou

shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High ...”

Mary asks: “How shall this be, seeing I know not man?” Mary merely wanted to be enlightened concerning her duty. The problem was not her virginity. She was familiar enough with the prophecy of Isaiah to know that God would be born of a virgin. Mary’s only concern was that since up to this point in history motherhood and virginity had been irreconcilable, how would God arrange it? Her objection to the Virgin Birth was on the basis of science. The solution certainly cannot be natural; therefore, it must be supernatural. God can do it, but how? Long before modern biology questioned the Virgin Birth, Mary asked the scientific “How?” The angel answers that in her case, birth will come without human love, but not without Divine Love, for the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Holy Spirit, who is the love of God, will descend into her, and He that will be born of her will be “the Son of God.”

“Three awe-inspiring mysteries appear in thee, thou Asdvadzadzin; spermless conception, immaculate creature, virginity after birth; we praise thee, thou Asdvadzadzin, and magnify thee.”

Being told how Divine Love will supplant human love, and how she can be a Mother while remaining a Virgin, Mary gives her consent: “Be it done unto me according to thy word,” that is, as God in His Wisdom wills it, so do I. And at that moment the Word was conceived in her: “The Word became Flesh and dwelt amongst us.” Before the Fall, it was woman who came from man in the ecstasy of sleep. Now it is man who comes from a woman in the ecstasy of the Spirit.

Now it must never be thought that Incarnation would have been impossible without the Virgin Birth. Rash, indeed, would be the human mind to dictate to Almighty God the methods that He should use in coming to the earth. But once the Virgin Birth is revealed, then it is proper for us to inquire into its fitness, as we are now doing. The Holy Virgin did not

only serve the Will of God in the Incarnation but she was also the eyewitness-historian of what took place during the fulfillment of the Will of God. She was more than the eyewitness; she was also the accurate interpreter of these facts and as such gave to the Church a solid historical background for its content in faith.

It is a great loss to the world that the Evangelists, to whom the witness-historian had undoubtedly related the facts, did not describe these divine events in greater detail. They did not pause in their narratives to give us a single event in the life of the highest personality that mankind has ever known. They had the source at hand, the living and keenly aware Virgin Mary, who had seen, heard, touched, and treasured every event and detail in the life of Jesus Christ. She followed her Child with prayers, admiration and awareness, as He “grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom”. (Luke 2:40)

She followed Jesus day by day; she nourished Him and heard Him whisper, between smiles and tears, His first words. And His first faltering but resolute steps in their single all-purpose room brought joy to His mother. She prepared the many-colored robe for Him and sent Him to the synagogue-school, where He tasted the honey and butter of knowledge and learned to read the law from the Scrolls. All these details, and undoubtedly thousands of others, she “pondered in her heart”, against the background of the Angel’s announcement and Simeon’s prophecy. The human nature of Jesus Christ in flesh, spirit, and characteristics was the microcosm the little world, the epitome, of His mother. His human activities mirrored her personality, being “full of grace”. The Asdvadzadzin was a mystic garden which, though untilled, did produce Christ the Lord. She became the spiritual Ark of God which no profane hand may approach, yet the lips of the faithful cry with joy: “Thou art more exalted than all created things”.

V. How old was Joseph and why there should be a marriage?

The first reason for the marriage was that it kept the Holy Asdvadzadzin covered with honor until the time came for her to reveal the Virgin Birth. We don't know exactly when she revealed the fact, but it is likely that it was done shortly after the Resurrection. There was no point in talking about the Virgin Birth until Our Lord had given the final proof of His Divinity. In any case, there were only a few who really knew it: the mother herself, Joseph, Elizabeth, her cousin, and of course, Our Blessed Lord. So far as public appearance went, it was thought that Jesus was the son of Joseph. Thus the reputation of the Holy Mother was conserved; if Mary had become a mother without a husband, it would have exposed the mystery of Christ's birth to ridicule, and would have become a scandal to the weak.

A second reason for the marriage was that Joseph could bear witness to the purity of Mary. Because Joseph had kept his vow of virginity, and he knew that Mary also had such a vow, he was naturally surprised when he learned that Mary was with child. The surprise that Joseph felt was like that of Mary at the Annunciation: "How shall this be, seeing I know not man?" Mary wanted then to know how she could be both a virgin and a mother; Joseph wanted to know how he could be a virgin and father. It took an Angel to reassure them both that God had found a way. No human knowledge of science can explain such a thing. As Joseph had a mind to put Mary away secretly, the Gospel lifts the veil of the mystery to him: "But hardly had the thought come to his mind, when an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take thy wife Mary to thyself, for it is by the power of the Holy Spirit that she has conceived this child; and she will bear a son, whom thou shalt call Jesus, for he is to save his people from their sins'". (Matthew 1:20)

Now comes the second interesting question concerning Joseph. Was he old or young? We know very little from the

New Testament about him. Most of the statues and pictures which we see of Joseph today represent him as an old man with a gray beard. When one searches for the reasons why Christian art should have pictured Joseph as aged, we discover that it was in order to better safeguard the virginity of Mary. Somehow, the assumption had crept in that senility was a better protector of virginity than adolescence. Therefore, Joseph was made chaste and pure by age, rather than by virtue. This is like assuming that the best way to show that a man would never steal is to picture him without hands; it also forgets that old men can have unlawful desires, as well as young men. The Church will not ordain a man to priesthood who has not his vital powers. She wants men who have something to tame, rather than those who are tame because they have no energy to be wild. It should be no different with God in choosing Joseph to be the husband of Mary.

Joseph was probably a young man, strong, virile, athletic, handsome, chaste, and disciplined; the kind of man one sees sometimes shepherding sheep, or piloting a plane, or working at a carpenter's bench. Just as we would give very little credit to Mary if she had taken her vow of virginity after having been an old maid for fifty years, so neither could we give much credit to a Joseph who became her husband because he was advanced in years. Young girls in those days, like Mary, took vows to love God uniquely, and so did young men, of whom Joseph was one so preeminent as to be called the "just".

VI. Who were the "Brethren" of the Lord?

Although a few of the Church Fathers, like St. Epiphanius, St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Cyril of Alexandria held that "the brethren of the Lord" were children of Joseph by a former marriage, the vast majority held that they were cousins of Jesus. The Fathers give four reasons why they were not Mary's children and Mary was ever virgin.

1. They argue that her virginity was implied by her answer to the angel: "How shall this be done, because I know not man". (Luke 1:34)

2. If Mary had other children, why is Jesus so emphatically called "the Son of Mary? (Mark 6:3), and why is Mary never called the Mother of the brethren of the Lord?

3. The Gospel texts all imply that the brethren were older than Jesus. They were jealous of His popularity; they criticized Him and gave Him advice; they endeavored to lay hold on Him on the supposition that He was mad. (Mark 6:4, John 7:1, Mark 3:31)

4. If Mary had other children, why should Jesus, dying on the Cross, have entrusted His Mother to the care of St. John? (John 14:26, 27)

The word "brother" in itself proves nothing, for it had a very wide meaning among the Jews. It is used in the Old Testament for relatives in general, nephews, distant cousins, and first cousins. Besides there was no word in Hebrew or Aramaic for cousin, so that the Old Testament writers were forced to use the word AH, brother, to describe different degrees of kindred. For example, Jacob, speaking of his cousin Rachel, calls himself her father's brother, rather than style himself the son of her father's sister, the only way he could in Hebrew describe his real relationship. Incidentally, the Armenian language is very rich and more specific in describing blood relations. We are not satisfied by the description of "uncle, aunt, cousin, father-in-law, brother-in-law, or sister-in-law"; for example, "Gesoor" is the husband's mother, for the wife, and "Zokanch" is the wife's mother for the husband.

It is certain, therefore, that if Jesus had cousins, especially if they were born of the same mother, necessarily they would be called in the Aramaic tongue, His brethren.

VII. Veneration and Admiration of the position of the Holy Asdvadzadzin in the Bible and in the Armenian Church

Her person is pictured with words of the highest esteem in the Bible and in the Church. On every altar of the Armenian Church she is enthroned with the Child in her arms. On many occasions that is the only painting in the Church. The Armenian Church commemorates her in its hymnology and its prayers. It honors her personality and mission in superb prose and poetry. The Church has recorded her name in its redemptive truths and put it in the Creed. As the “handmaiden of the Lord” and because of her relation to the Savior, she is the highest member of the Church. Being one of our race, she was saved by Jesus Christ. Christians who pray for one another to God, who ask for intercessions, invoke the Mother of God to pray for them – she who is living the blessed life before the countenance of her Son and her Lord. The person of Virgin Mary, the God bearer, is given humble adoration and praises by the believer of Jesus Christ. She is more honored and glorious than the angels because she was chosen to serve a mission that no angel could serve. It is an impossible task for me to convey the poetic beauty of the hymns praising and magnifying her virtues and role in our redemption. No one could do justice to the intricately expressive language of St. Gregory of Narek, when he opens his soul and brings to light his innermost thoughts from the depths of his heart.

We have a few translations in the Variables of Archbishop Nersoyan’s Divine Liturgy, pages 137, 139, 171, and 173.

VIII. The Holy Virgin in the Orthodox, Roman and Protestant Churches

The attitude of the Orthodox Church towards the Holy Virgin is similar to our own. When we compare the feasts, we’ll find that they are almost identical. A large number of Protestant Christians ignore her in their devotions and thoughts.

I could say, they regard any mention of her with suspicion and dislike. Perhaps it is possible to account for this by the law of reaction. Among the Protestant Churches the Episcopal Church has set apart the Purification and the Annunciation with special collects and Gospels. They honor her more than the Holy Apostles but are silent about her ever-virginity.

Speaking about the Roman attitude, I would say that fundamentally they have the same attitude gone to some extreme. I think it will be sufficient quoting some authorities and prayers of supplication without any comments.

Bonaventura (1221 to 1274 A.D.) who became a cardinal and was canonized in 1482 writes: "Therefore, O Empress and our most benign lady, by the right of a Mother command thy most beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, that He vouchsafe to raise our minds for the love of earthly things to heavenly desires, who liveth and reigneth."

Bernardinus de Bustis who was the author of "The Office of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin" writes: "Since the Virgin Mary is Mother of God (and God is her Son, and every Son is naturally inferior to His Mother and subject to her, and the Mother is preferred above and is superior to her Son), it follows that the Blessed Virgin is herself superior to God, and God Himself is her subject by reason of the humanity derived from her."

From Liguori's "Glories of Mary": "Dispensatrix of the Divine Grace, you save whom you please; to you, then, I commit myself, that the enemy may not destroy me" (p. 100). St. Anselm, to increase our confidence in Mary, assures us that our prayers will often be more speedily heard, in invoking her name, than in calling on that of Jesus Christ (p. 96) ... "We, Holy Virgin, hope for grace and salvation from you; and since you need but say the word, Ah! Do so; you shall be heard and we shall be saved."

"We read in the Chronicles of St. Francis that brother Leo once saw in a vision two ladders, one red, and the summit of which was Jesus Christ; and the other white, at the top of which presided His blessed Mother. He observed that

many who endeavored to ascend the first ladder, after mounting a few steps, fell down; and on trying again, were equally unsuccessful; so that they never attained the summit; but a voice having told them to make trail of the white ladder, they soon gained the top, the Blessed Virgin having held forth her hands to help them.” “Mary so loved the world, as to give her only begotten Son.” (p. 476)

The Rosary, for instance, is made up of 166 beads, on which are recited one creed, fifteen ‘Our Father’s, and a hundred and fifty ‘Hail Mary’s. The Angelus, which in Roman Catholic countries is recited daily, contains three ‘Hail Mary’s in each recitation, so that she is addressed at least nine times a day in prayer, whereas, no similar devotion to the Father or Christ is recommended. The month of May every year is now specially dedicated to the Virgin and termed the Month of Mary, every day of which is expected to be chiefly occupied with devotions in her honor. Special altars are put up in Roman Catholic countries during May in her honor. Images of her, decked with flowers, etc., obscure the view of the high altar. A fervor and eagerness of devotion are then displayed, never seen on festivals of Our Lord. Some, indeed, have gone so far as to assert that in the Eucharist she is bodily co-present with Christ and there fed upon by the communicants.

Saturday has come to be regarded as the Virgin Mary’s Day, as Sunday is the Lord’s Day. A very large number of Roman Catholic pictures represent the Virgin Mary in heaven, enthroned above the clouds and encircled sby angels and cherubs. Even there she is represented with the infant Jesus in her arms, as if our Lord were still an infant even in heaven!

Immaculate Conception, according to the Roman Catholic Church, is the immunity from the stain of original sin divinely granted to the Virgin Mary in her conception. The Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary is not a teaching of the Armenian Church, nor even a “pious tradition” of its members. Pope Pius IX pronounced it in 1854 as a dogma of the Roman Catholic Church. P. Radbert after 856 created a thought that the Theotokos was released from the curse of

the original sin by a sort of sanctification. Later, in 1140 in Lyons, France, the clergymen renewed it as Immaculate conceptio (Immaculate Conception), meaning that the Virgin Mary was conceived from of original sin. It was a teaching of the Franciscans, but it was fought by the Dominicans.

In 1387, the University of Paris ordered the teachers to accept by oath this thought; Pope Sixtus IV approved its feast in 1483, but the Roman church did not pronounce it as a dogma until 1854 when Pius IX put the papal seal on the Bull. Of course the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary tends to make somewhat easier the virgin conception of Jesus Christ the Logos, but the method of adopting this dogma inaugurate something quite foreign to the ancient Church. Although the highest honor and reverence are paid to the Asdvadzadzin by the Armenian Church, it does not accept this teaching. It bestows the highest honor and reverence possible to the Virgin Mary by calling her what in fact she is, Asdvadzadzin, the Theotokos, the Mother of the Logos, who is the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Everything else is anti-climactic and less than this.

Summing up the teaching of the Armenian Church, we would conclude saying:

When the fullness of time came for the coming of the Savior, the only-begotten Son of God, Christ, was incarnate by the Holy Ghost and of the Virgin Mary and became man for our salvation. The Theotokos, Asdvadzadzin, the Birth-Giver of God, was blessed, magnified and elected to serve the Will of God by giving a fatherless birth to our Savior. The Armenian Church does glorify and magnify her, calling her Asdvadzadzin, Birth-Giver of God. Her personality is vivid in the Armenian Church. In the Bible she is mirrored in the “Magnificat” and in what she kept in her heart; on the altars the Blessed Virgin always appears with her Child and never alone; in the hymns her mission is related to her Son’s work; in Church teaching she is described neither as an ordinary woman, ever after her mission, nor as goddess-like, but as the Theotokos, Birth-giver of God for ever. The virgin birth

of Jesus Christ, her son, is a redemptive truth, and her ever-virginity a steadfast belief. Her mission was divine; her birth human, being one of her race. Therefore, the Armenian Church does not accept her immaculate conception. We believe in the assumption of her body as a “pious tradition”, but not as a dogma.

REV. ARNAK KASPARIAN
“The Digest” Vol. IV, 1957-1958

THE MOST BLESSED AMONG WOMEN

The Divine Liturgy has just started. The priest walks from vestry to the center of the chancel, and while the choir is completing the hymn of vesting, “Khorhoort Khorin”, the priest washes his hands with the help of the deacon with whom he is reciting Psalm 26 in secret. Now the singers have ended the final stanza of the hymn, and there is a momentary silence. Then the priest, his eyes directed to the center of the altar, intoned: “By the intercession of the holy Mother-of-God, O Lord, receive our supplications and save us”.

Who is the holy Mother-of-God?

She is the holy Virgin Mary, of whom the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was incarnate, was made man, and was born perfectly by the Holy Spirit, for us men and for our salvation. This the church proclaims in Nicene Creed which is recited a little later on in the Divine Liturgy.

To help the worshipper visualize the holy Virgin Mary, Mother-of-God, the church has a large painting of her with the Child Jesus in her arms or on her knees, placed on top of the gradines of the main altar. There she is, “in Throne”, fully clothed in rich robes.

Even when no Divine Liturgy is celebrated, and the service in church is limited to Nocturne or Matins, the holy Mother-of-God is mentioned constantly. If it is the early moment of public confession, the priest says: “I confess before God and before the holy Mother-of-God”. If the series of hymns in the category of “Our Father” are being sung, invariably there is a “Magnificat” (“My soul doth magnify the Lord”. Luke 1:46) to be sung, followed by a prayer of intercession whereby the assistance of the holy Mother-of-God is sought. When it is time to sing “Park ee bartzoons (=Gloria in excelsis) we address the Second Person of the Holy Trinity and say to Him: “Lamb of God and Son of the Father who took our nature of the Virgin”. In the Litany for Sundays and Eastertide known by its beginning word as “Asatzook”, there is an Ascription between verses 15 and 16, wherein the priest

says: “We hold as intercessors Saint Mary the Mother-of-God, the glorified, blessed and holy Ever-Virgin, Saint John the Baptist, Saint Stephen the Protomartyr, the holy Apostles and the prophets, the brave and triumphant holy martyrs.” In almost the same words and the same setting, the intercession of the holy Mother-of-God is requested before any one else is mentioned, even on the feast of a Saint.

Why does Saint Mary the Virgin, the Mother-of-God hold such an exalted position in the hierarchy of saints? Obviously because she combines in her personality the qualities of saintliness, virginity and motherhood to Jesus Christ God. No other creatures, not even any of the angels, enjoyed this unique privilege.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find in the Armenian Church Hymnal 756 specific references to Saint Mary the Virgin, Mother-of-God. In these references the name Mary is mentioned not too frequently: only 62 times. It is significant that the Armenian Church never sings of “Mary, Mother of Jesus”, thus refusing to indulge in a humanistic interpretation of the relationship between the Virgin Mary and her divine Son who was the Savior of mankind.

The Armenian hymnal views Saint Mary as

- a. Generatrix (Birth-Giver)
- b. Mother
- c. Virgin
- d. Fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies
- e. Mediator and intercessor, as the most supreme among earthly creatures

St. Mary as Generatrix

She is not only the “vessel for incarnation of the Son” but also Generatrix of the Creator, of the only-begotten Son, of the Word of God the Lord, of the Bridegroom of the Church. She is the Theotokos par excellence, that is to say she is the one who gave birth to God. Incidentally, the word Theotokos (in Armenian: “Asdvadzadzin”) is used 78 times in the hymnal

as a description of the Virgin Mary. The emphasis on Mary's role as Theotokos originates from the adherence of the Armenian Church to the anti-Nestorian spirit of the Council of Ephesus (431 A.D.)

St. Mary as Mother

St. Mary as a mother, but a most unusual one. For she is Mother not only of Light and Life, but also of the Incomprehensible Economy, of the Salvation of all, of the Bridegroom of the Creator, of the Savior, of Emmanuel, of Christ, of the Logos, of the Only-begotten, of the Lord, of God. Mary was called to motherhood of Christ, the Only-begotten Son of God.

St. Mary as Virgin

The hymnal praises Mary, not only as "Virgin", but also as a "Holy Virgin". For of her was born and was incarnate the Son of God. This mystery of incarnation was accomplished "without seed". Mary's womb was virginal even after her motherhood. Her milk by which Jesus Christ was nursed was virginal. She was an unwed virgin, a pure virgin, crown of virgins. She was a mother once, and once only. On the basis of this doctrine of the permanent virginity of St. Mary, the Armenian Church, along with the ancient apostolic churches, rejects the notion that Jesus had brothers and sisters born of Mary.

St. Mary as fulfillment of Old Testament Prophecies

Using the allegorical method of interpretation, our Christian forefathers have seen several allusions to the Virgin Mary in Old Testament passages. Thus, she is the "Tree of Life" planted in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:9). She removed the curse and sentence of pain pronounced upon Eve (Gen. 3:16). The Son born of her lifted the fallen nature of mankind back to heaven (Gen. 3:23). She was the hospitable tent of

Abraham (Gen. 18:1-8). She was the bush burning with fire and not consumed (Exodus 3:2), thus preserving her virginity. She was the pillar of fire guiding God's chosen people (Exodus 13:21-22). St. Mary was the golden pot of the first covenant holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded (Hebrews 9:4; Numbers 17:8). The fleece out of which Gideon wrung out the dew was a symbol of the Virgin Mary (Judges 6:36-40). She was a purified temple, an altar of light, a shining candle-stick in the manner in which the temple was built by King Solomon. In the Song of Solomon, she was his undefiled dove (Song 8:9). Isaiah, son of Amos, had predicted the birth of the child Emmanuel of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14), and had spoken of a shoot that would come forth out of the stock of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1). And finally the perpetual virginity of St. Mary was predicted by the prophet Ezekiel in his vision on the sanctuary: "And Jehovah said unto me, this gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, neither shall any man enter in by it; for Jehovah, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it; therefore it shall be shut." (Ezekiel 44:2)

St. Mary as Mediator and Intercessor

Our religious poets, in their zeal and admiration for the Holy Virgin as an accessory of the salvation of mankind, have created many figures descriptive of her. She is an unfading flower, a lily of the valley, a fruitful plant, a vineyard, a divine paradise, a clean grove, a treasure of life, nuptial chamber of light, nuptial chamber of the Logos-bridegroom, a joy-giving morning star, a peaceful dawn, a sunrise of righteousness, a road to the Kingdom, a mountain who gives birth to a rock, receptacle of Godhead, a base of steadfast hope, foundation and glory of the Church, foundation of the new world, mystery of the holy Church, mystery of life, pavilion of the Logos of the Father, tabernacle of the Holy Spirit, throne of the Logos of God, dwelling of the Godhead, promenade of God the Logos, interpreter of the Godhead, maid-servant of God, blessed among women (Luke 1:28), most

holy lady, mistress, bride from earth unto heaven, daughter of light, earthly seraph, corporal cherub. Last but not least, St. Mary is the intercessor of the world, and mediator of law.

Veneration of St. Mary

With all this poetic license in glorification of the Virgin Mary, the Armenian Church has always avoided the idolatrous worship of her. Veneration of St. Mary is not synonymous for us with Mariolatry. St. Mary is never to be represented in statues in our houses of worship. She is an obedient instrument of the Holy Trinity, but she is not God. Salvation was the work of Jesus Christ the Son of God incarnate. The Virgin Mary, as the chaste vessel of this incarnation, is the most exalted among God's creatures.

This is why we mention her name in our prayers and hymns. Like the rest of the saints, she is an intimate friend of God, and has the power to intercede for us. Indeed, she is a step closer to God than the other saints. St. Mary is the Holy Mother-of-God. Therefore, returning to the beginning of the Divine Liturgy, we may join the deacon in bidding:

“Let us make the holy Mother-of-God and all the saints intercessors with the Father in Heaven, that He may be pleased to have mercy and to have compassion and save His creatures.”

REV. ARTEN ASHJIAN

“The Armenian Guardian” August 1961

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

On the Icon of Virgin Mary

Q. In the icon of the Virgin and Child placed above Altar in Armenian Churches, how is our Lord to be portrayed?

A. Jesus must not be portrayed simply as a sweet and helpless little infant but He is to be seated erect on the left forearm or in the lap of His Virgin Mother facing forward but His body slightly inclined toward her, His right hand raised in blessing and with a loving but profound and powerful expression in His eyes. The Virgin should not be looking straight ahead, but her eyes should be directed toward her divine Son and Savior. His halo, as we have already pointed out, must have within it the outline of a cross, signifying His deity.

Q. In holy icons what difference is there between the halo around the head of a saint and the halo around the head of Christ?

A. Within the halo around the head of Christ there is the outline of a cross signifying that He is God, while within the halo around the head of a saint there is no cross. The outline of a cross is also seen within the halo around the head of the Dove-symbol of the Holy Spirit, again signifying deity.

Q. Why does the Armenian Church use Western type icons of the Blessed Virgin and Child Jesus?

A. The Armenian Church does not require that her icons be of the Western or Roman type, nor, incidentally, of the Byzantine type. It is true that Western-type icons are often seen in Armenian churches but that is due either to the unavailability of Armenian-type icons or the ignorance or carelessness of those who have been entrusted with the responsibility of procuring the icons. It must be emphasized that Western-type icons do not satisfy the requirements of the

Armenian Church. Western-type icons of the Virgin and Child, which are usually products of Renaissance art, are too naturalistic or humanistic. The Armenian Church requires that icons of Christ, even icons of His Infancy, must express His Deity and power and majesty, so that in a truly Armenian icon of the Nativity Christ would be portrayed not as a weak and helpless infant but rather He would be represented as sitting in His Mother's arms facing toward us. His hand raised in benediction and His head adorned with a crown. The Virgin likewise would be portrayed not as a soft, passive maiden but as the Woman of the Ages, strong with Faith and Virtue and Love for God and Mankind. The Byzantine icons of the Virgin and Child come closer than the Western to the Armenian Church's conception but they are noted for their coldness of expression and lack of grace and awkward proportions. It must be admitted that it is not easy to produce icons of the Virgin and Child which will express the Armenian Church's conception and this is no doubt one reason why they are not found in abundance.

VERY REV. MESROB SEMERJIAN

"The Armenian Guardian"

December 1962, June 1969

THE HOLY CROSS

Symbols occupy a very important place in the Christian religion. They express to us in a visible way some invisible truth which words are unable to convey clearly. A piece of yardage of material, for example, does not have such value or special significance in itself, but once a nation accepts that piece of material for its own flag, that material immediately assumes almost a sacred meaning, because it is the symbol of the particular nation and country.

The Cross is the most sacred symbol of Christianity. It is the sign of the Christian religion. It was the first sign used by Christians, and it will be the last sign to appear in the history of the Church. It is related in the Gospel; once the disciples asked: "Tell us what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world"? (Mat. 24:3). He gave a long answer to this question and among many other things said, "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven" (Mat. 24:30), referring to the sign of the Cross. Christians, especially Apostolic, Catholic and Orthodox Christians render great reverence to the Holy Cross.

Every Christian should know why we render much veneration to this holy sign of the Cross. The answer is that Christ gave His life for our salvation on a cross; from that day on it became a reminder of the great sacrifice that the Son of God made for mankind. That is the reason why the Church from the early days has given so much importance to this sign; that is the reason why the Armenian Church has established so many feasts in honor of the Holy Cross. We have four such holy days.

As this sign reminds us of the greatest sacrifice ever made on earth, the cross has assumed, in Christian vocabulary, the meaning of a life of endurance, courage, and sacrifice. Our Lord once said, "He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me" (Mat. 10:38), meaning that those who cannot endure moral hardships, those who cannot sacrifice their own selfish and bodily interests for the sake of a higher

life of sanctity and honesty, cannot worthily be called Christians.

Sometimes we lament that the Armenian people and Church have had to live in the past in most trying conditions, persecutions and tribulations. We must, however, give thanks to Almighty God, for He has given to this people and Church the strength and the courage to live a life worthy of their faith in such trying conditions. Our Lord's first formal utterances were a praise of those people who experienced similar difficult conditions: "Blessed are the poor in spirit... "Blessed are they that mourn ... "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness ... "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad ... for great is your reward in heaven" (Mat. 5: 3-11).

The meaning of the Christian Cross, however, will never be understood by the generation of this century of pleasure and materialism. St. Paul already declared this fact long ago: "The preaching of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God." (I Cor. 1:18)

From a Christian standpoint a life without a cross is almost worthless and meaningless. Although most of us are living a most comfortable, even a luxurious life, we are not however entirely free from crosses. The present society in which we live and of which we are a part, unfortunately is made up of individuals who are imperfect. Therefore, as a consequence of this human imperfection, which reveals itself in human ignorance, petty jealousies, pride, etc., willingly or unwillingly we will have inevitable troubles in this world. No matter how often we ask God to "deliver us from evil", evil will always remain on earth. Such is the unfortunate order of this imperfect and wicked world.

If we grumble and complain over the hardships that we encounter in this world, then we are not true Christians. We must fight against evil with courage and endurance and at the same time with gentleness and charity; this is the moral

significance of the Cross. We must first try to eliminate the evil that is in our soul and then the evil which is in our community. If, however, we are unable to do away with these evils, we must bear them patiently, without malice and without complaint. Such is the kind of life which is worthy of Christ, who Himself gave the greatest example of forgiveness, forbearance and sacrifice.

We must not ask God to take away our crosses. They are opportunities and channels for us to gain more merit before God and gain more blessedness in heaven. We must ask God to give us wisdom and strength and to increase our courage and patience to bear them bravely. Only then the blessedness, which our Lord promised to those who show patience to the end, will be ours. May God make us worthy of this blessedness.

BISHOP SHNORK KALOUSTIAN
“Saints and Sacraments” (pp. 95-96)

FEASTS OF THE HOLY CROSS

Before the time of Christ, the cross represented the severest punishment possible for an individual. It was used in putting criminals and run-away slaves to death because it was such a slow and tortuous process. Because it was such a disgraceful way to die, no Roman citizen would be crucified, according to the law of the land.

Yet we know that Christ was crucified on a cross, and thereby gave it new meaning. By this death, the Cross has been changed from the instrument of shame to the symbol of the highest glory.

It was not very long before the early Christians began to use the sign of the Cross as the symbol of their faith – that through Jesus Christ death had at last been conquered.

The Cross is such an important symbol to the Church that our early Church Fathers had special feast days set aside dedicated to the Holy Cross. In the Armenian Church, there are four feasts of the Holy Cross: Exaltation of the Holy Cross, Holy Cross of Varak, Invention of Discovery of the Holy Cross, and Apparition of the Holy Cross.

Exaltation of the Holy Cross

This is the greatest of the four celebrations of the Holy Cross. The Church observes this one the Sunday nearest to September 14, that is, the Sunday falling between September 11 and 17. Exaltation of the Holy Cross is a Dagharar Feast. On the day of the feast, there is a procession and Antasdan, the blessing of the four directions of the world.

In the 7th century, the Persians captured the Cross of our Lord after devastating the city of Jerusalem. Emperor Heracles (610-641) fought against the Persians and liberated the Cross and upon its return exalted it before the Christians with solemn celebrations.

The Holy Cross was carried from Persia through Armenia. The Armenian army participated in freeing the Holy Cross from captivity.

Holy Cross of Varak

Celebration of the piece of our Lord's Cross discovered on Mount Varak near Van, where it was concealed by Hripsime^{**}, the nun who hid this holy relic from her persecutors. Tradition has it that a hermit by the name of Thodik saw a vision of a church with 12 pillars on the top of Mount Varak. He saw in the center of the pillars a cross radiating light all around it. This luminous vision descended and stood over the altar of the monastery of Varak, hence the name, the Cross of Varak. It was discovered about 650 A.D. Catholicos Nerses, the Builder, came to Varak and verified the authenticity and historical details of the relic and proclaimed the nearest Sunday to September 28 to be the Feast of the Holy Cross of Varak. To this day, our church celebrates this feast which falls on the Second Sunday after the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross.

Invention or Discovery of the Holy Cross

Empress Helena, mother of the Roman Emperor Constantine, commissioned an army to recover the True Cross, the Cross of the Crucifixion. After many years of searching, they found three crosses under the rubble heap in Jerusalem.

For many years after the crucifixion the site was lost. Even today, the exact site is unknown. Many scholars, how-

^{**} The heather emperor of Constantinople wanted Hripsime for his wife, but she refused to marry him, and was forced to flee Constantinople with her companions to hide among the rocks of Mt. Varak in Armenia. When the emperor heard of her escape, he sent soldiers after her and her companions. Hearing this, Hripsime left her relic of the Holy Cross among the rocks of Mr. Varak and continued her escape with her companions. She was later martyred by the Armenian King Tirdat.

ever, accept the 5th century tradition of a site inside the North Wall covered by the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, begun in 325 A.D. following the visit to Jerusalem of Helena, mother of Constantine the Great. Inside the tottering structure of this historic church (now supported by metal buttresses) shared by 6 Christian groups (of which the Armenians are one) an impressive 14 ft. hillock called “Calvary” rises to the balcony level. The term “Place of the Skull” may have sprung from the skulls seen in ancient times on the site, or from the legend that the “Skull of Adam” was buried here. The name “Calvary” is derived from the Latin “calvaria” meaning skull. “Golgotha” is from the Aramaic for “skull”.

It is at present inside the city walls, rather than “without the gate” (Heb. 13:12) where crucifixions took place – it may well have been outside the walls of Jesus’ time.

The twenty two chapels of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre are shared by several eastern churches, each of which has its allotted space (the Armenians have two chapels). The heart of the structure is the marble Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre wherein our Lord was laid. It is perpetually lighted with forty three lamps provided by the various religious groups. The Sacristy contains priceless relics of the Crusades, which poured out of Europe during the middle ages to free this Church from Moslems. The Church also has a shrine covering the Stone of Unction – where our Lord’s body was anointed before burial.

After the discovery of the Crosses, tradition tells us that in order to be sure which of the three crosses was our Lord’s, the body of a newly deceased man in a passing funeral procession was taken and placed on the crosses, one by one. When he was placed on the Cross of our Lord, a miracle occurred – he came alive.

The Apparition of the Holy Cross

Yerevman Soorp Khatch. This feast day always occurs on the fifth Sunday of Quinquagesima. (Quinquagesima is a

Latin term meaning “50” and is used to designate the 50 day period between Easter and Pentecost).

In the year 351 A.D., a miracle related to the Cross of Christ occurred. The countryside around Jerusalem is made up of hills and valleys. One can look from the Old City Walls by the Golden Gate, where Christ entered in the city on Palm Sunday, and look across to the Mount of Olives. In the sky above this countryside one day appeared a huge cross over Mt. Zion. It was seen stretching from the Mt. of Olives to Golgotha (a distance of approximately one and one-half miles). It appeared in the afternoon, and was visible to everyone in the area – Christian and non-Christian.

We see some samples of sky-writing today and it certainly makes us marvel. But think of what it must have been like to see God’s handiwork in the sky over 1600 years ago. The miracle affected everyone. Christians were strengthened in their faith, and many non-believers were converted as a result of this glorious sight. It is an event which is celebrated by all True Churches.

We have historical proof of this Apparition of the Holy Cross. A famous letter pertaining to it is preserved by our Armenian Church. The presiding Archbishop of Jerusalem, Guregh, wrote to the Emperor Constantine II of Constantinople telling him of this great miracle^{††}.

^{††} We are sorry to inform you that the remaining part of the manuscript affiliated with the Apparition of the Holy Cross is missing.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

On Women in the Church

Q. Are there not other duties a woman or girl could perform in the church besides serving as choir member or organist or Sunday School teacher to help out the parish priest or to directly serve the altar? It seems to me women are left out of an awful lot in Church. Is there any special reason for this?

A. Unfortunately there is not much more women can do to directly assist the priest during divine worship. As it is, wearing the Choir member's robe and singing from within the chancel is a privilege enjoyed nowadays by our womenfolk against the provisions of our canons. For canonically of the female sex only nuns may sing in the chancel and usually in their convent churches. Incidentally the Armenian Church permits nuns to be even ordained sub-deacons and deacon in order to serve in those capacities at the altar, but only in their convent churches. As to helping the priest in the general work of the church, there is no doubt that our womenfolk can do and are doing a great deal, especially in religious education. However, if they are to serve efficiently as teachers of religion they should receive professional training, at least in the basics of religious education. One of the reasons why our present Sunday School program is not producing satisfactory results is that our teachers are not properly trained for their work. Of course, if we had nuns in large numbers, as in the Roman Church, they would be ideal persons to manage the religious education of our children.

Of course clerical work is another field in which our womenfolk can be of great assistance to their priests. Women (and men, too) can also assist their priest by helping to bring back drifted or drifting members of the church. Every parish should have several committees of devoted men and women (two men or youths in each male committee and two women or girls in each female committee) to pay informal friendly visits to those men and women or youths of their parish who

need a return to the Church and to vital Christianity. Indeed our Women's Guilds, Men's Clubs, Mr. & Mrs. Clubs and ACYOA ought to make such visitations a regular and integral part of their program.

Finally, the constant practice of the Christian virtues in one's everyday life in the world at large will be one of the greatest helps to the work of the priest for it is precisely that which he is striving to promote. A life full of faith, hope and charity (love) and charitable (loving) deeds is itself a supreme contribution to the work of the Church for it is the work of the Church in fruition.

“The Armenian Guardian” July 1962 (p. 6)

Q. Since the time of St. Rhipsime and St. Gaiane, the nuns martyred by King Tiritades (Dertad) to what extent have religious orders for women developed within the Armenian Church? Do any orders of nuns exist within our Church at the present time?

A. Unfortunately, the history of consecrated virginity and of nunhood in general in the Armenian Church has not yet been studied systematically. In our calendar of saints we have at least 57 female saints listed under the category of “virgins”, and there is a special introit (zhamamood) for feast days of virgins. On such days instead of chanting “Only-begotten Son” (Miadzin Vorti ...) we chant: “O ye who were espoused Christ the Heavenly Bridegroom, ye daughters of the Upper Jerusalem, ask of Christ in our behalf for reconciliation and for His great mercy.”

It appears however that organized nunneries have never been common in the Armenian Church, perhaps because of the almost constantly unsettled condition of the Armenian people and the danger of nuns being violated in times of invasion by non-Christian troops. It is significant that the nunneries we have had (in more modern times) have all been established on non-Armenian soil. The Englishman, H.F.B.

Lynch, in his important work entitled “Armenia: Travels and Studies” mentions that at the consecration of Catholicos Murgurdich Khrimian an Armenian nun from Tiflis, Georgia, had come to attend, and he includes her photograph in his book. She had come more probably from St. Stephen’s convent of Tiflis which has been one of our few nunneries of modern times. Another important Armenian nunnery of modern times has been St. Catherine’s Convent of Nor Joogha in Iran, which however has not been operating for several decades. An effort was made to revive this nunnery about ten or fifteen years ago when the late Armenian Patriarch, Cyril, of Jerusalem blessed his own sister as a nun and sent her to organize it, but the attempt apparently was not successful.

In Istanbul we have a few nuns in charge of the Calfayan Orphanage for girls, established in 1850 by Sister Surpouhi Calfayan. Our oldest nunnery at present is the Holy Archangels’ Convent within the confines of our Monastery of Saint James in Jerusalem. The members of this nunnery are at present mostly (or perhaps all) widows rather than virgins. Archbishop Malachi Ormanian however states that at the time of his writing (around 1915) most of the members of the convent were virgin nuns and only a few were widows. We need not point out that as critical as is our shortage of priests, our shortage of nuns is even more critical. Along with greatly increased numbers of priests we also need an army of trained and devoted nuns. They could do wonders for our Church and people, especially in these troubled times.

VERY REV. MESROB SEMERJIAN
“The Armenian Guardian” July-August 1958

THE FEAST OF HOLY TRANSLATORS

The fifth century in Armenian history marks the beginning of a new era of erudition, spiritual, and cultural enlightenment. The Feast of the Translators is indeed the feast of Armenian thought and culture. This is the feast of all those who studied under the tutelage of St. Sahag and St. Mesrob and served Armenian letters and Armenian culture with esteem and reverence. In this manner we pay due homage to the Translators.

St. Sahag and St. Mesrob have become the most outstanding benefactors to the Armenian people through their discovery and creation of the Armenian alphabet, through their missionary and educational work, and through their translations of the Bible. Through their providential services, they imparted new zeal and spiritual vitality to the Armenian nation.

Throughout the year the Armenian Church on two occasions commemorates St. Sahag and St. Mesrob and their disciples (Translators).

St. Sahag, the son of Catholicos Nerses the Great, was born in 348 A.D. He received his elementary and higher education in Caesarea and Byzantium. He was raised to the throne of Catholicos in 387 A.D. In his relentless search for the Armenian alphabet with St. Mesrob, St. Sahag secured the active support of King Vramshabouh. Through his knowledge of Greek, sacred music, rhetoric and philosophy, St. Sahag greatly assisted in the classification and the final adoption of the characters of the Armenian alphabet as well as in the translation of the Holy Bible.

St. Mesrob was born in 350 A.D. He had mastered the Persian, Assyrian and Greek languages. At first he served at the King's Court, but, disregarding the ease and comfort of this career, he abandoned it and dedicated himself to the ministry of the Gospel. In this career of his life he experienced the urgent need of an Armenian alphabet and the Bible in Armenian. To devise these, he set himself to work. Ultimately, he achieved his goal by inventing the Armenian alphabet.

St. Sahag and St. Mesrob finally succeeded in creating the Armenian alphabet and translating the Bible into the vernacular of classical Armenian. For its clarity of language, it is called the “Queen of Bible translations.”

The cultural work initiated by St. Sahag and St. Mesrob, and their disciples, marked the era of the cultural and spiritual renaissance that in Armenian history is known as the Golden Age of the 5th century.

Among the renowned translators, we commemorate Yeghishe Vartabed, the historian of the “Battle of Vartanank.” Yeghishe Vartabed was a student at the school of St. Sahag and St. Mesrob. There is little known of his life, but history relates that he was the secretary of St. Vartan and accompanied him to the Battle of Vartanank. By this token he was enabled to give an eye-witness account of the Holy War of St. Vartan which he so magnificently recorded in his book “The Battle of Vartanank.”

Moses of Khoren, the “Father of Armenian History,” was the first historian who wrote the history of Armenia, beginning with the legendary era, and ending with his own time. He too was a student in the school of St. Sahag and St. Mesrob, and is known as a great poet as well as a historian.

David the Invincible was a philosopher. He was educated in the best schools of his time. In Athens, where he studied philosophy, he was unequalled in his ability to discuss and argue on all matters pertaining to philosophy. For this reason he was known as “David the Invincible.”

To these best representatives of the Fifth Century Phalanx of writers, two more saintly persons are added.

The first, St. Gregory of Nareg, a saintly character who for centuries has abided within the soul and heart of the Armenian people, attained the crowning glory in the realm of mystic and spiritual literature of the Armenian Church. He was born in 951 A.D. After his mother’s death, his father, Bishop Khosrov of Antzev, entered the priesthood. Gregory and his brothers in turn embraced the priesthood. Thus the entire family dedicated itself to the service of God. Gregory

studied in the monastery of Nareg under the tutelage and guidance of his uncle, Anania Vartabed, one of the outstanding intellectuals of his period. Universally speaking, Gregory was a great genius, a great poet, and unequaled as a mystic intellectual. He is known as the author of a series of valuable works. The prayer book, known as the Nareg, is his most important creative achievement. It comprises 95 chapters in which he exposes the human soul drenched with imaginable and unimaginable sins. In this prayer book, the soul accuses itself before God, the Judge Impartial, yet a compassionate, merciful and forgiving father. Nareg for centuries has become the second Bible in every Armenian home. Gregory of Nareg passed away at the age of sixty, presumably in 1010 A.D. He is buried in the Monastery of Nareg.

St. Nerses Shnorhali, an outstanding Catholicos of the Armenian Church, truly is named Shnorhali, (grace filled), for his noble spirit, for his character of highest integrity, and for his intellectual attributes. He was born in the Castle of Dzovk, the son of Prince Abirad, and raised to the throne of Catholicos in 1165 A.D. He became an outstanding personality and churchman of his time for his determination and skill, for his caution and prudence in the negotiations with the Greeks, and for his mastery of clear style and brilliant oratory. Many are his works in the literature of the Armenian Church. His first encyclical, on the occasion of his consecration as Catholicos, is unique in its high devotional seal and exhortation of the faithful in observing their Christian obligations. He composed sharagans (hymns) and chants in the “Book of Hours” of the Armenian Church. Particularly those for the Morning and Lenten services, and his Prayers, among which “I Confess in Faith” (Confession of Faith) are well known to every Armenian worshipper. After Gregory of Nareg, it is Nerses Shnorhali who has so profoundly impressed himself upon Armenian spirituality. He is revered as one of the great saints of the Armenian Church. The Armenian people venerate this great ecclesiast as a saintly poet, sacred musician,

and theologian. He passed away in 1173 at the age of 75 in Romglah.

VERY REV. YEGHISHE GIZIRIAN
“The Armenian Guardian” October 1960

THE SIGNIFICANCE AND THE PLACE OF SAINTS AND THE SAINTS OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

This lecture has two parts; the first is about the concept of saints in general and their place and importance in the church, the second is what the title suggests.

-A-

Let us first of all see in what ways the term “saint” is used in the New Testament. We find it used interchangeably with the term “holy”. The Armenian equivalent of both “holy” and “saint” is “soorb”. We find the term applied to Scriptures, as in Romans 1:2; to Christian calling, as in 2 Timothy 1:9; to faith, as in Jude 20; to sacrifice, as in Romans 12:1; to the prophets, as in Luke 1:70; to St. John the Baptist, as in Mark 6:20; to pre-Christian saints, as in Matthew 27:52; to Christians as “holy brethren”, as in Hebrews 3:1; to the children of Christians, as in 1 Corinthians 7:14; to Christ, as in Acts 4:27, 30; to Angels, as in Mark 8:38, and to God, as in John 17:11.

Christians, as persons who are consecrated to God, who profess Christ and are sanctified by the Holy Spirit, are described as “holy” in many passages. The members of the Christian community in Jerusalem are called “saints”, as we find in Acts 9:13, Romans 8:27, 1 Corinthians 6:1, etc.

The root idea of the word “saint” or “soorb” is separation; one who is separated, consecrated, one who belongs to God. In the early years of Christianity attention was directed to individuals who by deeds and lives of extraordinary piety seemed to reveal the presence of the Spirit in exceptional fullness. Naturally this character was ascribed to those whose lives were crowned with the glory of martyrdom, a view definitely expressed for the first time in the account rendered by the community at Smyrna of the death of Polycarp (155 A.D.).

Early Christians, unlike several modern peoples, used to celebrate the death day of the departed as their birthday into Eternity, for, as the Psalmist says, “precious in the sight of all His people is the death of His Saints” (Psalms 116:15). On this day especially their aid was invoked by the rest of the faithful.

Regarding the veneration of the shrine and the memory of the departed “saints”, the approach advanced by the Jews that the Christians of Smyrna seemed desirous of adoring Polycarp in the place of Christ caused the community to define their attitude toward the martyrs whom they declared they “did not worship as they did Christ the Son of God, but regarded them with fond affection as witnesses and imitators of the Lord”. Yet Lucian (3rd century) bears testimony to the reverence with which the confessors were regarded even in their lifetime.

The veneration of saints in the Eastern Church was formally sanctioned by the Second Nicene Council (787), which, however, distinguished the reverence due to the saints and the absolute worship to be rendered to God alone . In the Middle Ages it was the voice of the people that at first bestowed the title of holiness, as in the case of St. Francis of Assisi, who was canonized 2 years after his death (1228).

Like the Roman Church, the Eastern Orthodox Churches consider the doctrine of the veneration of saints to be an integral part of the Church’s tradition. In the Greek Orthodox Church the saints are invoked “not as Gods but as friends of God”. The Russian Church has added many saints to those it received from the Greek Church, but it knows no actual process of canonization.

What is a patron saint ? A saint chosen to be the guardian, special intercessor with God, and protector of a place, a person or an association according to the practice of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Churches. This practice developed in part from the veneration felt for the early Christian martyrs and, in some cases, the possession of their relics. Churches, countries, towns, villages, professions, etc., as well as indivi-

duals are dedicated to a patron saint and are under his care. Many saints are traditionally associated with a particular country or trade. In Armenia there are many monasteries, where the shrines of saints are situated and have become subject to the veneration of the faithful, who make pilgrimages to the shrines. In the Armenian Church, altars are called after the names of great saints. At the consecration of a church you will see also that the columns of the church, or parts of the inside walls of the church are consecrated in the names of the 12 Apostles, also of St. Paul, St. Krikor Loosavorich (Gregory the Enlightener), etc.

Most Armenian churches have 2 side altars which are called lesser altars. The one on the right (the sides are defined by facing the congregation) is or should be dedicated and consecrated in the name of St. John the Baptist, because the baptismal font is located on that side. The left altar is dedicated to the Holy Virgin Mary (Soorb Asdvadzadzin), who is regarded as the Queen of Heavens and heads the list of saints.

The saints have been described by Christian writers and the people as “friends of God and intercessors before His Throne”.

The authoritative “Roman Catechism”, issued in accordance with the Tridentine decrees, says the following about the place and nature of the veneration of saints: “We ask God to grant blessings; we ask the saints to be our advocates.” To God we say: “Have mercy on us”; to the saints we commonly say: “Pray for us”; and if at times we ask the saints, also, to have mercy upon us, it is in a different sense. We beg of them, as they are full of pity, to take compassion on us and to interpose in our behalf.

The 22nd of the 39 articles of the Church of England condemns “The Roman doctrine concerning Purgatory, pardons, worshipping and adoration, as well as of images as of relics, and also invocation of saints is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scriptures, but rather repugnant to the Word of God”. Yet we know that they

celebrate several saints and have “All Saints Day”, as there is one in the Armenian Church, too.

In strictly Protestant churches the intercession of saints is regarded not only superfluous, but derogatory to the character of Christ as the sole advocate.

How is a saint canonized in the Roman Catholic Church? Canonization is the process of attributing the title of saint to a man or woman already known as “blessed”. In the first centuries of Christianity, canonization was effected in each country by the joint act of one or more bishops and their people. Of this act they left as a rule, sufficient testimony by dedicating a church in honor of the new saint, whose name it thenceforth bore, and by instituting an annual festival in his honor. In the Roman Catholic Church, the candidate is first designated as “of pious memory” and, after a regular investigation, as “venerable”. If it has conclusively shown that he has lived a holy life and worked miracles, his beatification may be requested, but normally not until fifty years after his death. The process is first conducted by the bishop of his home; a commission of the Congregation of Rites examines whether it is permissible, in which case papal authority to proceed is granted. In order to make the necessary demonstration that the candidate possessed “heroic” virtues and worked miracles, three separate investigations are held – one before the Congregation of Rites, one before the whole College of Cardinals, and one before a consistory held under the Pope’s presidency. When the Pope has approved the request, a brief is drawn up which grants the title of beatus and determines the limits of the consequent cultus, including commemoration and invocation in public worship, the erection of altars, public exposition of relics, and the like. The solemn publication of the decree of beatification takes place in St. Peter’s Cathedral.

While the veneration of the “blessed” is limited to a certain definite part of the Roman Catholic church, that of the saints is extended to the entire church.

Liturgical saints are classified, in the Roman Catholic Church, as Apostles, Martyrs, Bishops or Confessors (saints who were neither bishops nor martyrs); similarly female saints are martyrs, virgins, widows, penitents, etc. These designations have been added (as far as needed in every instance).

The Armenian Church does not have the elaborate canonical order of canonization as it exists in the Roman Catholic Church. In general, it is the piety of the people being convinced of the true spiritual worth of a saint which starts venerating him and the higher authority of the church, which always after full conviction of the worth and sanctity of the candidate, declares him a saint and is officially celebrated, according to the calendar.

What is the church's belief in the communion of saints?

The clause in the Apostle's Creed: "I believe in the communion of saints" indicates that this is an integral part of the Christian faith. According to this belief, Jesus Christ is the Head of the family of baptized Christians, both living and dead. If the dead are conscious, as Matthew 22:32 implies, we must believe that they pray for us (Revelation 6:9-11). Our fellowship with each other is based on mutual love and prayer. The departed form with us "the general assembly and the church of the first born" (Hebrews 12:23).

In the Roman Catholic Church there is an All Saints Day, when the saints in Heaven are celebrated, and the faithful pray to them. There is also an All Souls Day for the souls in Purgatory, and the faithful pray for them.

In the Eastern churches, the congregation prays for all the blessed and departed alike. We are fellow citizens with the saints, as Ephesians 2:19 indicates. Two special terms are used for the departed and living Christians: Church Triumphant and Church Militant. The first is the group of people who have terminated their struggle with evil, the devil and have departed from this world triumphantly. The militant church is the visible church on earth, engaged in the same battle against the evil and the temptations of the world. This idea is based on the conception of the church's unity. In Philaret's "Longer

Orthodox Catechism” the following questions are found pertaining to this:

“262 – Q. Is there likewise unity between the church on earth and the church in Heaven?

A. Doubtless there is, both by their common relation to the One Head, our Lord Jesus Christ, and by mutual Communion with one another.

263 – Q. What means of communication has the church on earth with the church in Heaven?

A. The prayer of faith and love. The faithful who belong to the church militant upon earth, in offering their prayers to God, call at the same time to their aid the saints who belong to the church in Heaven; and these, standing on the highest steps of approach to God, by their prayers and intercessions purify, strengthen, and offer before God the prayers of the faithful living upon earth and by the will of God work graciously and beneficially upon them, either by invisible virtue, or by distinct apparitions, and in diverse other ways”.

The Catechism also says that the prayer of saints in Heaven is grounded on the passage in Chronicles 29:18, “O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers keep for ever such purposes and thoughts in the hearts of thy people, and direct their hearts toward thee”. And the mediatory prayer of saints is based on Revelation 8:34, “And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censor ...And the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God”.

Because saints and living Christians constitute one family of believers, those who are closer to God, by virtue of the saintly life they have lived while on earth, pray with us to the same Father of All, so that with His grace we also may achieve the state of blessedness. The doctrine of intercession is based on Scriptural teachings.

The idea of intercession in the Old Testament

This idea is expressed in the Old Testament in the words “to stand before God”, such as we find in the book of Jeremiah 15:1: “Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my heart would not turn toward this people”. Or in Job 1:6: “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord” (also 2:1). In the book of Zachariah also (1:12-13) we find God listens to the intercession of special people, leaders of the people, who speak on their behalf, and God answers them. Another good illustration of such an intercession is found in the book of Exodus (32:13; 33:13).

In the New Testament, we find that Christ did not speak against intercession and did not correct it as wrong, as He did other wrong Hebrew conceptions. In the Gospel according to St. Matthew, we read that our Lord admonishes people not to “despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven” (18:10).

Jesus reminds the people in another place that they had set their hope on Moses who spoke before God on their behalf (John 5:45).

In the parable of the fig tree also we find the idea and practice of intercession near the Master, the Lord (Luke 13:6-9, also 16:27-31).

More explicit references are found to the intercession of saints in the book of Revelation “...which are the prayers of the saints” (5:8); also “And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer; and he was given such incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar before the throne” (8:3).

It is not always that the good people, the leaders of God’s people speak before God. “The accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God” (Revelation 12:10).

In the apostolic letters we find frequent mentions about praying for each other, for example in II Corinthians: “you also must help us by prayer (1:11), or “pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To this end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints” (the fellow Christians) (Ephesians 6:18). Another passage on mutual prayer is the following: “To this end we always pray for you...” (II Thessalonians 1:11). More explicit mention about intercession is found in the first letter of St. Paul to Timothy: “I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions...” (2:1-2). In the same chapter we find a statement about Christ being the one and only mediator between God and men (2:5).

The difference between Christ’s intercession and that of the saints is that Christ’s intercession lies in the giving of His life and death for the redemption of mankind and for the new covenant (I Timothy 2:5-7). Whereas to intercede before God for men to give them grace and to have mercy on them is appropriate to saints, not to Christ.

The idea of intercession in the Old Testament

This idea is expressed in the Old Testament in the words “to stand before God”, such as we find in the book of Jeremiah 15:1: “Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my heart would not turn toward this people”. Or in Job 1:6: “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord...” (also 2:1). In the book of Zachariah (1:12-13) we find God listens to the intercession of special people, leaders of the people, who speak on their behalf, and God answers them. Another good illustration of such an intercession is found in the book of Exodus (32:13; 33:13).

In the New Testament, we find that Christ did not speak against intercession and did not correct it as wrong, as He did other wrong Hebrew conceptions. In the Gospel accor-

ding to St. Matthew, we read that our Lord admonishes people not to “despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven” (18:10).

Jesus reminds the people in another place that they had set their hope on Moses who spoke before God on their behalf (John 5:45).

In the parable of the fig tree we also find the idea and practice of intercession near the Master, the Lord (Luke 13:6-9, also 16:27-31).

More explicit references are found to the intercession of saints in the book of Revelation “...which are the prayers of the saints” (5:8); also “And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer; and he was given such incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar before the throne” (8:3).

It is not always that the good people, the leaders of God’s people speak before God. “The accuser of out brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God” (Revelation 12:10).

In the apostolic letters we find frequent mentions about praying for each other, for example in II Corinthians: “you also must help us by prayer ... (1:11), or “pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To this end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints” (the fellow Christians) (Ephesians 6:18). Another passage or mutual prayer is the following: “To this end we always pray for you...” (II Thessalonians 1:11). More explicit mention about intercession is found in the first letter of St. Paul to Timothy: “I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions...” (2:1-2). In the same chapter we find a statement about Christ being the one and only mediator between God and men (2:5).

The difference between Christ’s intercession and that of the saints is that Christ’s intercession lies in the giving of His life and death for the redemption of mankind and for the

new covenant (I Timothy 2:5-7). Whereas to intercede before God for men to give them grace and to have mercy on them is appropriate to saints, not to Christ.

Hymns (“sharagans”) of the Armenian Church, especially those dedicated to or written about the saints, have abundant references to the fact of intercession asked by the people to the venerated saints and to their Head and Queen of Heavens, the Holy Mother of God, especially. Sometimes like “Remember us in your prayers”, “with their prayers have mercy upon us, Lord”, and “with their (saints’) prayers and intercessions ...” are frequently used as the refrains of the hymns dedicated to the saints.

Before we pass to the second part of this lecture an ultimate and ethical question must be asked and answered: “Why must we strive to become saints?” The answer is, because to become saints is the purpose of all Christians and mankind and it is to this end that Christ gave His life. As we read in Romans: “To all God’s beloved ... who are called to be saints” (1:7). Christ became sin “for our sake ..., so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). As one of the church fathers, Irenaeus (2nd century) put it: “God became human, so that men would become divine.”

Who is a saint?

Is he an unattractive lackluster person who rarely, if ever, smiles and who has little interest in his fellows? A joy killer, solemn and dry, who is forever wearying people with his jeremiads about the vanities of the world and frightening them with his predictions of divine wrath?

Contrary to this too prevalent misconception a saint is the most attractive and likable of all people. He is filled with a constant love of God and of all His children. He is joyous, serene, and considerate. In his veins runs the mild of human kindness. True, he retains his individual characteristics. For sanctity shines through the stained-glass windows of human nature with its unending variations in temperament and personality.

A little French boy was asked to define a saint. All he could think of were the figures he had seen in the stained-glass windows of the church. So he answered, "A saint is a man the light shines through".

Sanctity means putting into practice the implications of the mighty truths of the Fatherhood of god and the brotherhood of men. The supreme joy in life is the quest for sainthood. The supreme tragedy is the loss of it.

To be saved, to become a saint is possible only through Jesus Christ, who came to 'save his people from their sins' (Matthew 1:21). "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

To achieve this, "believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). This was given as an essential condition to the converted jailor of St. Paul and Silas, who were praying and singing hymns in the prison, when "suddenly there was an earthquake" (Acts 16:26). The Word of God and the practicing of it ensure our salvation (Romans 1:16, I Corinthians 1:18). Our justification, sanctification or salvation comes by grace through faith" (Ephesians 2:8).

A friend once wrote to the Russian novelist Ivan Turgenev: "It seems to me that to put oneself in the second place is the whole significance of life". Turgenev thought otherwise. "It seems to me", he replied, "to discover what to put before oneself in the first place is the whole problem of life". Christ is the being whom all the saints put before themselves. They commit themselves without reserve to the spiritual values which were embodied in their fullness in His ministry of redemptive love and sacrificial service for mankind. It is loyalty to Christ that pulls the trigger of the energy of their minds and hearts and souls, issuing in deeds of kindness and love. Surrendering himself to the highest prayer of every heart is:

"Make me a captive, Lord,
And then I shall be free;
Force me to render up my sword,
And I shall conq'ror be".

Among the most courageous of all people are the saints of God. Never is courage lacking in any saint. It is always present to a supreme degree. St. Paul writes: "In all things we suffer tribulation, but are not distressed; we are straitened, but are not destitute; we suffer persecution, but are not forsaken; we are cast down, but we perish not; always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies".

One might still ask "Why must we be saints or holy at all?"

The answer is given by God Himself to Moses: "Say to all the congregation of the people of Israel, you shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy" (Leviticus 18:2, also 20:7, 22:32). Also in 1 Thessalonians 4:3, "for this is the will of God, your sanctification".

One of the most satisfying definitions of saints is that of Nathan Soderblom: "Saints are persons who make it easier for others to believe in God".

Thousands of years ago the Psalmist declared: "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" That has been the light by which the saints, prophets, and holy men and women of God in all ages have walked the paths of courage, righteousness, and honor. "Give me light", implore the individual struggling with the baffling confusion and darkness of the present hour, "that I may tread safely into the unknown". The saints reply: "Go out into the darkness, and put your hand in the hand of God. That shall be to you better than a light and safer than a known way". While clasping that almighty hand, man will walk in the footsteps of the saints, guided safely through the labyrinth of a changing and war-torn world, by a light that has never failed.

-B-

In the Armenian Church the days of the liturgical year are divided into three types celebration.

a. Sundays and certain other days and weeks are laid aside for the commemoration of the different phases and aspects of our Lord's life and ministry. With a few exceptions, almost all the Sundays in the year are dedicated to the feast of the Resurrection of our Lord or any other dominical feast.

b. Wednesdays and Fridays, as well as the period of Lent and the days preceding or weeks of certain feasts are fast days.

c. Saints are celebrated during the other days. 100-120 days alone from 365 days of the year, are dedicated to the commemoration of the feast of Saints in the Armenian Church.

The non-Armenian saints commemorated in our church, which are quite numerous and far more in number than the Armenian saints, were introduced into the Armenian calendar prior to the 5th century (451 A.D.), when division occurred in the unity of the Christ's Church, and the Armenian Church with the intention of remaining loyal to the original doctrine and dogmas of the Christian Church, did not find it necessary to go along with other churches in making elaborate and often repetitious dogmas and policies in the so-called subsequent ecumenical councils, several of which had monarchical tendencies and political motives.

Prior to the 5th century all the same saints were celebrated in all the churches in general. The apostolic and catholic (universal) character of Christ's Church required this. It is for the same reason that those non-Armenian saints are still commemorated in the Armenian Church.

The saints are divided into two major groups:

a. Those saints who are celebrated ("donelee soorber") and they are mentioned during the Divine Liturgy ("Soorb Badarak") and other Hour-Services ("Jamerkootyoon").

b. Commemorated saints ("Heshadagelee Soorber"), whose life stories are read from the book "Haysmavoork", a book on the lives of the Saints.

Among the saints celebrated in the Armenian Church, there are saints from the Old Testament, the New Testament, the apostolic period and hence, until the 15th century.

Saints are celebrated from all walks of life. Thus, after the Holy Virgin Mary, the Mother of God (Queen of Heavens), saints are the angels, and most of the saints are found among patriarchs, prophets, apostles, catholicos, bishops, priests, deacons, nuns, virgins, kings, queens, generals, commanders, soldiers, governors, princes, princesses, abbots, theologians, ascetics or monastics, doctors, scribes, notaries, “voluntary poor”, children, etc. This is an indication to the large, all-inclusive extent of the spread of the Christian faith. St. Vartan is the most popular national saint, because he embodies in himself the two complete qualities of a saintly person, namely sanctity and martyrdom. He had full conviction and firm faith in the Word and the Work of Jesus Christ and His Saving power, and he gave his life willingly for the preservation of his faith.

There are several saints who are celebrated more than once during the liturgical year. Different events or aspects of their lives are commemorated on separate days. Thus, the Birth, the Beheading, the Transferring of Relics of St. John the Baptist are commemorated on separate days. The Holy Virgin Mary, the apostles and St. Gregory are celebrated more than once during the year.

The following are the numbers of saints, belonging to different churches, who are celebrated in the Armenian Church:

Church of Antioch	2,626
Church of Cilicia	8
Church of Mesopotamia	10
Church of Jerusalem	6
Church of Cyprus	1
Church of Alexandria	37
Church of Ethiopia	10,000
Church of Caesarea	13
Church of Sephaste	96
Church of Licaonea	9
Church of Pontos	5
Church of Ephesus	25
Church of Constantinople	12

Church of Thessalia	3
Church of Galatia	13
Church of Bythania	20,106
Church of Rome	15
Church of Africa	2
Church of Persia	29
Church of Armenia	1,712

Beside these, there are several saints' days in which an indefinite number of saints are celebrated. For example, this year on October 24th the following saints were celebrated: "St. Anasdas, Varos, Theodoret and his sons and those who were martyred with him". The number of the sons and the latter is not known to us. On October 31 – "St. Stephen the bishop of Rome and the priests, the deacons and the people". We have no way of knowing the number of the latter. Still on November 5th the following were celebrated: "Archangels Gabriel and Michael and all heavenly powers". Here also we have no way of knowing the number of "all heavenly powers". The following also present an indefinite number: 1955 November 29 – "St. Lucian ... Onesemus and other disciples of Paul". December 8 – "Fathers of Egyptians ... and other holy fathers". An approximate number is found for the army of St. Andre the commander, which is about 2,600. Another approximate number is 510 Adomian commanders and their scattered soldiers.

Another number with a big question mark is that of the children of Bethlehem who were slaughtered for Jesus. Still another feast is that of "Forefathers Adam,... and other forefathers or patriarchs". There is a particular day during the year when all the "ancient and new, known and unknown" are celebrated. This has quite an all-inclusive scope, but there is no way of defining the exact number.

Counting all the possibly known numbers of the saints in the Armenian Church, we have a total of 37,577 saints.

The last saint who was canonized in the Armenian Church is St. Krikor of Datev, 15th century.

Political unrest, economical conditions have made it impossible for the dignitaries of the Armenian Church to have a National General Ecclesiastical Council and to reconsider, among other things, the calendar of the church and to make necessary omissions and additions. We hope that when that Council takes place, the numerous Armenians who were martyred for their faith since the 15th century will be included in the calendar. But be it as it may, let us not forget that to be a saint is the ultimate goal and the ideal (to be realized) of all Christians.

Saints are the glory of the Christian family, the Church; we must follow their glorious example by turning the eyes of our hopes to them and say the hymn:

“Blessed and glorified martyrs,
Who endured numerous sufferings,
You are robed by the light of the life,
And to Christ intercede for us”.

“Marderosk yeranyalk yev paravoryalk.
Vork pazoom danchanatzun hamperetzeek,
Took uzlooyesen genatz usketzyal ooneek,
Yev ar Krisdos vasn mer parekhosetzek”.

DEACON HOVHANNES KASPARIAN

“The Digest”

Association of Armenian Church Choirs of America

Diocese of the Armenian Church of America

1955-1956, Volume III

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

On the Saints

Q. Who was the last saint canonized in the Armenian Church and why haven't any saints been canonized in modern times?

A. The last saints canonized in the Armenian Church have been St. John of Vorodn (d. 1388) and St. Gregory of Datev (d. 1410) who were officially canonized in 1775 by Catholicos Simeon of Erevan. Since then no canonizations have taken place even though we have had many saints both before and after 1775 who had to have been given canonical recognition as saints to be celebrated during the services, or at least entered in the great Book of the Lives of the Saints (“Haismavoork”) as commemorable saints. One reason why we haven't had many canonizations in modern times and none at all since 1775 is the high degree of sanctity which the Church naturally seeks in those who are to be canonized. But an even greater reason has been probably the growing nationalism of our people during the past one hundred fifty years which has shifted our attention away from highly spiritual matters such as the canonization of saints.

“The Armenian Guardian” November 1958 (p. 11)

Q. Does the Armenian Church have any non-Armenian saints in her calendar?

A. Yes, the Armenian Church has many non-Armenian saints. This is in keeping with the fact that she is and acknowledges herself to be but the Armenian section of the catholic or universal Church of Jesus Christ. Indeed the vast majority of the saints in the calendar of the Armenian Church are not Armenian. Very interestingly, of the many saints celebrated in the Armenian Church during the present month of November not even one is Armenian – all are non-Armenian

representing many areas of the world, namely Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, Asia Minor, Greece and Rome. It might also be interesting to add here that among the various saints of the Roman Church celebrated by the Armenian Church there are included three popes, namely St. Clement, St. Stephen and St. Sylvester, of the first, third and fourth centuries respectively. We ought also to add that on November 7 this year occurs the feast of the archangels Gabriel and Michael and of all the angelic host. The feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin is always celebrated on November 21. All Saints' Day, which most often occurs during November, fell this year on December 31.

VERY REV. MESROB SEMERJIAN

“The Armenian Guardian” November 1959 (p. 4)

ANGELS

The Church venerates not only saints but also the angels. The Armenian Church celebrates the feast of the Holy Archangels, St. Gabriel and St. Michael, and of all the Heavenly Hosts.

The Christian Church believes in the existence of spiritual beings, called angels. This belief is biblical, and is confirmed by both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

There are many passages in the Bible about angels. For example, some angels visited Abraham in connection with the destruction of the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. It was the angel of God who guided the people of Israel into the Promised Land. The angel conversed with prophets. They served as guides to the servants of God. It was an angel who announced the birth of St. John the Baptist. Angels gave the good news of the Birth of the Savior to the shepherds. They sang the first Christian hymn, "Glory to God in the highest (Luke 2:14). Our Lord often spoke about angels. They were the first and joyous witnesses of His glorious Resurrection. Thus angels appear every now and then in the course of the biblical history from the beginning to the end.

The existence and appearance of angels being a matter of historical record, we must learn now something about their nature.

Angels are spiritual beings created by God at the beginning of the creation of the world. They are gifted, like men, with intelligence and free will, but they are distinctly different from men in the fact that they do not possess physical bodies.

They are by nature invisible to men, but they can manifest themselves, if God so wills, in assumed or apparent bodies.

The word Angel is a Greek word meaning "messenger". The Armenian word for Angel, "hreshdag", has the same meaning. This gives a clue to the nature of their function: angels attend God and execute His commands on earth and in the universe as a whole. St. Paul said, "They are ministering spirits sent to minister to them who shall receive the inheritance of

salvation” (Heb. 1:14). In other words, they are God’s servants who carry out His orders.

Angels are represented throughout the Bible as a class of spiritual beings, intermediate between God and men. It is commonly accepted that there are nine orders or classes of Angels. The degree of their closeness to God and the character of their function, serve as the basis for their classification into different orders.

It is an established belief that all Christians, at least all children, have their Guardian Angels. “See that you despise not one of these little ones,” said Christ, “for I say to you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 18:10).

The function of these guardian Angels is to lead us, if we so wish, to the Kingdom of Heaven. I said, “If we wish,” because our guardian Angels can act upon our senses and upon our imagination, but never against our will; it is up to us to put our will into motion.

There are two or three angels who are mentioned by name in the bible; Gabriel is one of them. His name means “fortitude of God”. Gabriel is first mentioned in the book of Daniel, where he gives the explanations of certain visions which the prophet Daniel had seen (Dan. 8:16). Gabriel appears under his own name twice in the New Testament, first to Zachary, father of John the Baptist, announcing the birth of a child to him (Luke 1:19), and second to Mary, mother of Jesus, announcing the birth of Christ (Luke 1:26).

“I am Gabriel who stands before God”, said he about himself. From this reference some have been led to believe that this Angel belongs to the highest rank.

The next Archangel mentioned by name is Michael, which means “who is like God”. According to tradition, “who is like God?” was the war-cry of the good angels who fought against those angels rebelled against the authority of God. As the leader of the rebellious angels boastfully identified himself with god the Almighty, the loyal angels used to cry, “who is like God?” This war-cry was given as a proper name

to the leader of the good angels, St. Michael. He also is mentioned in the Book of Daniel as the assistant and colleague of Gabriel, as “one of the chief princes” in heaven (Dan. 10:13). He is also mentioned in the Epistle of St. Jude (1:19) and in the Book of Revelation of St. John, as the champion of the Church against the powers of evil (Rev. 12:7).

In Christian art St. Michael is represented as an angelic warrior fully armed with helmet, sword, and shield, standing over a dragon with his lance pierced through the monster. On other occasions he holds a pair of scales in which he weighs the souls of the departed, showing that he has a function in the last judgment of souls.

Besides the two individual Archangels, the names of two groups of angels are also mentioned in the Bible. The first are Seraphim; these are a special class of attendants of God’s heavenly court. These angelic beings are distinctly mentioned only in the book of the Prophet Isaiah. While he, Isaiah, stood in the Temple, he saw the presence of God on the Throne of His Glory. On each side of the Throne stood mysterious guardians, each supplied with six wings: two of these wings were for holding them up, two for veiling their faces, and two for covering their feet in the majestic presence of the Almighty. They are the closest servants of God, standing near His Throne and ministering to Him and proclaiming His Glory, each calling to the other, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His Glory” (Isa. 6:3). One of these Seraphim flew towards the Prophet, having in his hand a burning coal with which he touched and purified the Prophet’s lips, so that henceforth those lips might be consecrated to the utterances of divine inspiration. The number of Seraphim is thousands and thousands. They appear around the heavenly Throne in a double choir and the volume of chorus is such that the sound of their song shakes the world (Isaiah Ch. 6).

The other class of heavenly beings frequently mentioned in the Bible is Cherubim. They are supposed to be the heavenly throne-bearers of God. That is why we see this sentence frequently used for God, “who sittest upon ‘Cherubim’”.

Angels, like Saints, were held in the greatest veneration in the Christian Church. Churches have been dedicated to the names of angels. Their protective power is clearly recognized by the Church and it is asked in prayers by the faithful. God is asked to sustain those who are laboring in this world by the protecting power of His heavenly hosts. God is praised and thanked for the favor of this angelic protection.

Belief in Angels is in full keeping with our deepest and holiest feelings. We naturally long for spiritual and heavenly connections beyond this world. In our calm and thoughtful moments we feel the impression that we have direct and unbroken fellowship with intelligent beings higher and better than we are. This peculiar impression attains a greater depth and richer sweetness when a spirit feels itself alone, or when it has freed itself from the bondage of perishable things. Let all those who think otherwise remember that there is sometimes more truth in the vague impressions or feelings of the heart than in the dry conclusions of the head. For love, which is the heart's activity, is more penetrating than thinking, which is the activity of the mind. The things that live forever and are loveliest are mostly born in the heart. This belief in angels did but intensify and strengthen it.

Angels Day, therefore, is a day when we remember our better and higher friends, who are willing to assist us in our fight against the temptations of our common adversary, the Devil. It is a day in which we must cultivate in ourselves the angelic virtues of faithfulness to God, holiness of heart and purity of mind and soul. It is a day to invoke angelic assistance in carrying our prayers before the Throne of the Almighty. Finally it is a day in which we praise the most Holy Name of God, saying in unison with the angels: "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts: Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Blessing in the Highest. Amen."

BISHOP SHNORK KALOUSTIAN
"Saints and Sacraments"

THE TWELVE APOSTLES

The word Apostle is a Greek word, and means one “who is sent forth,” having been entrusted with a special mission.

It is related in the gospels that from the beginning of His ministry our Lord called some twelve men and gave them intensive training for a specific office, in which authority and duty were joined. He named them Apostles.

The Apostles were to be with Jesus while He was on earth, to aid Him in the preaching and in the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

The mission of the Apostles is summarized in the following words of instruction, which our Lord gave them before His ascension into heaven: “All power is given to me, in heaven and on earth. As the Father has sent me, I also send you. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you all days, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:18-20).

The Apostles’ lives were a constant exercise of this last instruction. Wherever they went they preached the Gospel with authority, being the authentic witnesses of the life and teaching of our Lord; they established churches wherever they went. Since the authority, with which the Lord empowered the Apostles, was given them not for personal use but for the entire Church, it is natural to assume that this authority should last, and that it should remain in the Church after the death of the Apostles. Therefore, like their Master the Apostles also selected some people as their successors and transmitted their authority to them. These successors of the Apostles were later called bishops. The power of a bishop, in governing and teaching the Church, is essentially the same as the general authority of an Apostle.

The Church has been called “Apostolic,” because the mission of the Church is identical with the mission of the Apostles. When we say that our Church is “Apostolic,” we

mean that the Church of today is identical with the Church which was founded by Jesus Christ and of which the government and the continuation was entrusted to the Apostles. The Apostolicity of a Church is of great importance, because it is the surest sign of the true Church of Christ. Apostolicity is one of the four marks of the Church. It contains in itself the other three marks of the church which are Unity, Sanctity, and Catholicity; an Apostolic Church can be only One, Holy and Universal.

The term “Apostolic Church,” also signifies, in its narrower meaning, those particular ancient Churches which were directly founded, or at least for a while governed, by an Apostle, and which on that account, enjoyed a special dignity. Our Church is “Apostolic” in this sense too. By the term Apostolic Succession is meant that the mission conferred by Jesus Christ upon the Apostles passes from them to their legitimate successors, in an unbroken line, until the end of the world. Apostolic Succession ensures the continued identity of the Church.

Let us say a few brief words about each of the twelve Apostles of Christ.

(1) St. Peter was the most active figure among the twelve. His former name was Simon, which Jesus changed into Peter, which is a Greek word meaning “rock.” He made the memorable confession: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;” thus he became the first official member of the Church, because the Church was going to be composed of those who would accept our Lord as “Christ” (which means One “whom the Lord has anointed”) and as “Son of God.” Although St. Peter had the weakness to deny his Lord when Jesus was arrested, nevertheless he repented, and was later pardoned and was restored to his office as Apostle by Christ. He first preached in Jerusalem; he was imprisoned but miraculously escaped from the prison. He was finally crucified in Rome, head downwards, in 67 A.D.

(2) St. Andrew was Peter’s brother. He was one of the first to follow our Lord as a disciple. He preached in Nor-

thern Greece, Epirus and Scythia, and suffered martyrdom in about 70 A.D. on an X-shape cross, which for that reason is called St. Andrew's cross.

(3) St. John has been called "the beloved disciple" in the Gospel. He was the one among the Apostles who had the courage to follow Christ to the place of His Crucifixion. He was the only faithful disciple standing at the foot of the Cross on Calvary. St. John became the adopted son of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of Christ, and took good care of her until her death. He went to preach in Asia Minor, and was later banished to an island called Patmos, where he experienced those marvelous visions or revelations which are recorded in the last book of the New Testament, called the Apocalypse, or the Book of Revelation. He also wrote the last Gospel, the Gospel of St. John, and three Epistles. He died at the age of one hundred years by a natural death.

(4) St. James the Major was the elder brother of St. John. He was the first among the Apostles to be martyred, being beheaded in Jerusalem in the year 44 by King Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:2). The St. James' Armenian Monastery of Jerusalem is dedicated to his name. The sanctuary where his head is buried and where a beautiful church is built, is visited and venerated not only by Armenians but by all Christians who go to Jerusalem as pilgrims or visitors. It is now one of the most important holy places in the Holy City.

(5) St. Matthew was probably the only one among the Apostles who was not a fisherman. He was a government official, a tax collector, and perhaps the one Apostle who had a better knowledge of reading and writing. He wrote the first book of the New Testament, the Gospel according to Matthew. He preached among the Persians and Parthians, and was martyred in Parthia (present Iran).

(6) St. Thomas was famous for his doubts and for his realism. He would not believe in the Resurrection of Christ until he saw, on the hands and feet of Jesus, the marks of the Crucifixion. He went as far as India, where he was martyred, pierced with a lance, on a hill which is now called "Mount of

St. Thomas” near Madras. He founded the Church of the Christians of St. Thomas in Malabar, South India.

(7) St. Philip is the only one among the Apostles who had a Greek name which means “horse lover”. Probably he spoke Greek, as it was to him that “certain Greeks came” with the request to be admitted to the present of Jesus (John 12:20-22). He preached in Asia Minor and was crucified in Hierapolis.

(8) St. Thaddeus was the first Apostle to visit Armenia. He preached first in Syria and the upper parts of present day Iraq; he then entered Armenia in 44 A.D., made many converts and was martyred there in 66 A.D.

(9) St. Bartholomew was the same as Nathaniel, “an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile” (John 1:47). He was the second Apostle of Armenia. He preached first in Arabia and Persia, and was later martyred in Armenia in 68 A.D. His tomb was venerated by Armenians until 1915 when Armenians were deported by Turks from their homeland. The shrine now is in ruins.

(10) St. Simon “The Zealot” preached in North Africa and was martyred in Persia.

(11) St. James the Lesser was the son of Alphaeus. He preached in Palestine and Egypt and was finally crucified in Lower Egypt.

(12) St. Matthias was chosen to take the place of Judas Iscariot, who betrayed the Lord. He preached in Ethiopia and was martyred there.

(13) St. Paul was not one of the Twelve, but was converted miraculously one year after the Resurrection of the Lord. Paul was first a persecutor of Christians. His conversion took place as a result of a vision in which he saw Christ bidding him not “to kick against the goads” (Acts 26:14), but follow His instructions (Acts chapter 9). Though not of the Twelve, yet among all the Apostles St. Paul was the most ardent and diligent laborer. He wrote many Epistles, which we still read in the Church. He is called the Apostle of the Gentiles,

because he carried the Gospel to the pagan world. He travelled extensively, and was finally martyred in Rome in 67 A.D.

“Remember your leaders, who preached to you the word of God, consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith ...do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings” (Heb. 13:7-9). These memorable words have always echoed in the hearts of early Christians as referring to the Apostles, their teaching and life. The members of the early Church had a profound respect for the Apostles when they were living on earth. We must have the same respect; and that is what we show by remembering them on Apostles’ Day. The Armenian Church commemorates each Apostle twice in the year; first on the fest of Twelve Apostles^{††}, secondly they are celebrated two by two on various Saturdays of the year. Our veneration of their memory should find expression in the devotional reading of the Apostolic writings, that is, the Gospels and the Epistles of the Apostles, in following their instructions, and in imitating their virtues and their devotion to Christ, for the salvation of our souls, for the revival of our Church and for the greater glory of God the Almighty, whose devoted servants they were.

BISHOP SHNORK KALOUSTIAN

“Saints and Sacraments”

^{††} Saturday before the 6th Sunday after Pentecost.

SAINT JAMES OF MEDZPIN

There are many different traditions about the identity of St. James of Medzpin. He is considered an Assyrian by his nationality, and you will wonder, “Why include the name of an Assyrian in the series of ARMENIAN SAINTS?”

Well. There are a few good reasons. First of all he can be considered partly Armenian. Although his father was an Assyrian, he was related to St. Gregory the Enlightener, our patron Saint, from his mother’s side. Moreover, the Assyrians at that time were in close relationship with the Armenians as were the Parhians. The Assyrian Mesopotamia, known as Aso-rik, was virtually part of Greater Armenia and there were many Armenians and Assyrians living together in that region using the Armenian language as their practical language.

Eventually St. James of Medzpin became one of the most popular Saints of the Armenian people. Armenians have shown an extraordinary affection and devout fervor towards him.

Many Armenian Churches are dedicated in his name as St. James; however, I believe it is possible that the exact rendition of his name into English should be Jacob (Hagop) rather than James (Hagopos). In so doing there would be no confusion regarding the identity of other Saints revered by the Armenian Church who bear the same name.

There are two other apostolic Saints with the name James, mentioned in the New Testament, whose double names are borne by the brotherhood and the monastic Order of St. James of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem. One of these, St. James (brother of the Evangelist John) known as “the Beheaded”, is the patron Saint of the monastery. The other St. James is known as “the Lord’s Brother”, the first bishop of Jerusalem, who set the foundation of the Apostolic See of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

We don’t know the exact date of the birth and death of St. James of Medzpin. We can only say that he is a man of the 4th century, for he lived and labored circa 350 A.D.

His life and figure emerged in the distance of past centuries and has some legendary qualities. He was educated during his childhood with St. Gregory the Enlightener, in Caesarea (of Cappadocia), the famous educational center of Asia Minor. Caesarea is adjacent to Armenia and is known as the Lesser Armenia (Pokr Hayk).

St. James of Medzpin was consecrated Bishop for the See of Medzpin of Mesopotamia by Melidios, Archbishop of Antioch. His consecration took place in Amit (near Tikranagerd), and thenceforth he was known as St. James of Medzpin after the name of his Episcopal See.

He was one of the 318 participant Bishops of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.).

He became famous for his most virtuous and pious life and ascetism. He won fame and popularity especially for his “wonder-working” power, for which he is sometimes called “skanchelakordz” which means simply, “wonder-worker”.

The most beautiful story linked with his name is the famous legend of his climbing Mt. Ararat in search of Noah’s Ark. He is known as the first man who ever tried to climb Mt. Ararat to quench this strange but devout desire. This famous legend is worth repeating here: According to the story, St. James of Medzpin desired to climb Mt. Ararat in order to find Noah’s Ark. Despite his old age he set out to climb the huge mountain. On the way, becoming very tired, he stopped to rest and fell asleep. In his sleep an angel approached him and told him that he was too old a man and that it would be humanly impossible for him to climb all the way to the top; but to satisfy his ardent desire and deep faith the angel gave a piece of Noah’s Ark, saying to him, “Take this and satisfy your desire.” St. James, being content with this piece from Noah’s Ark, returned to his home.

Certain writings, doctrinal and moral-ethical in character, are traditionally ascribed to St. James.

Also there have been written some important works in his honor, of which can be mentioned the following two:
(a) St. Gregory of Narek, the great Armenian mystic of the

9th century, has written a beautiful oration dedicated to him. (b) The chant of his feast-day, known as “Victorious and Holy Father” (Haghtogh yev soor Hayrabad), was written by Catholicos St. Nerses “the Graceful”, the great poet and theologian of the 12th century.

The feast day of St. James of Medzpin is commemorated in conjunction with two other Saints, the Hermit Maroukeh (from the Church of Mesopotamia), and Commander George^{§§} from the Church of Nicomedia. Their combined feast day is celebrated immediately prior to the Christmas season in the middle of December. The feast of St. James of Medzpin signifies the name day of those Churches that are named after him, and it becomes a joyful occasion for the name day celebration of the Churches as well as for those whose names are Hagop (Jacob or James).

As an additional note, it is worth mentioning that according to the traditional pious belief, this piece of Noah’s Ark is in our Holy See of Etchmiadzin.

DEACON GARO PAPAŽIAN

“The Armenian Guardian” March 1957

^{§§} This is wrong. St. George is not commemorated with St. James; St. Meletius in the one. ED

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS On Evolution

Q. How is the scientific theory of evolution to be reconciled with the apparently mystical account of creation given in the Bible?

A. This question betrays, as in the case of most people, an ignorance of the fact that there are two different accounts of creation in the Bible and that the two accounts are quite inconsistent with each other. The account which the questioner is no doubt referring to (and which incidentally is the more ancient and the more primitive of the two accounts) is found in Genesis 2:4-3:24 (Please read).

The other account, less ancient, is found in Genesis 1:1-2:3. A comparison of these two Bible accounts of creation the two quite different methods and orders of creation, will of itself make evident that the purpose of the Holy Scripture is not to set forth a doctrine of the method or mode of creation employed by God, but the truth of creation itself and certain other related truths such as man's authority, under God, over all other earthly creatures, the subordination of woman to man, the origin and nature of sin and man's consequent unhappy state and need for salvation, etc.

As far as the mode and order of creation are concerned, there is room for the evolutionary concept in the Christian doctrine of creation if it be acknowledged that the process of evolution has not taken place by itself, but that God Himself has been the evolver, that He has created the universe and brought into being all its manifestations throughout the ages, including all living beings of all special and of all successive species throughout the ages. It is only when evolution is conceived as the product of blind chance, or of mere "natural selection" or the "survival of the fittest" without admitting that God Himself has been and still is the author of the whole process and that, therefore, there has been at work in it all along a divine purpose – it is only that concept, the naturalistic

or atheistic concept of evolution, that is objectionable and unacceptable to Christians.

VERY REV. MESROB SEMERJIAN
“The Armenian Guardian” September 1968

CIRCA 1915 A.D.
An Elegy: A Celebration

“The Consecration of a Cathedral”

It was the spring of 1915 A.D.

It was a time of breaking up. The long Victorian era had ended; the shorter Edwardian era had almost faded. On the thrones of Europe, monarchs, secure for centuries in their divine right, waltzed as effortlessly as ever through the precise rituals of the palace, seemingly unaware that the palace – the idea of a palace – was already under siege. In Switzerland, a radical named Karl Marx talked openly of revolution. In Austria, a young laborer named Adolf Hitler had not yet had his first taste of war. After decades of relative peace, the time was ripe for bloodletting as the century of the common man lurched headlong into darkness of its youth.

In the New World, Woodrow Wilson was President of the United States. In that spring, on May 7th, 1914 American men, women and children went to their death with the hull of the Lusitania, torpedoed by a German submarine off the coast of Ireland. The United States was barely beginning its assumption of world power. President Wilson was desperately negotiating to preserve American neutrality in the European war; his efforts toward that end would, the following year, elect him to a second term as the man who “kept us out of war.”

In the Old World, George V had hardly begun his long reign over the greatest empire in history when, the previous year, Great Britain had reluctantly joined with France, Russia, and most of the smaller European countries in an alliance against Germany’s declaration of war. On its side, Germany could count on the help of, among other countries, the small, ancient land then known as Turkey.

During the same spring of 1915, Turkey, fighting more against Russia than with Germany, used the cover of the war between The Great Powers to launch another, private war – a war almost unmatched in history for calculated meanness,

scope and breathtaking barbarity – against a people who has lived in that same land for more than 2,500 years, and whose principal sin was that they were Christians.

The people whom the Turks hated enough to slaughter were the natives of Armenia, a small patch of Asia Minor at the base of the neck of land which separates the Black Sea from the Caspian Sea. It is largely a high plateau fringed with mountains; according to biblical tradition, it was on one of these mountains, Mt. Ararat, that Noah's Ark settled after the long rains. Armenia lies in that area which the second chapter of the Book of Genesis identifies as the Garden of Eden. Within its boundaries the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers, along whose banks history has been moving since it began, both have their sources. It was a land well-traveled by Marco Polo on his way to the East, and by the Crusaders on the road to Jerusalem. It has been, despite Rudyard Kipling's dictum, the place where the East meets the West; it has been a melting pot of ancient cultures. It was a center of civilization when Austria was still a wilderness.

In his account of the Persian Wars during the 5th century B.C., Herodotus, the father of history, describes Armenians as shepherds; later on in the same history, Herodotus, referring to the Armenian conscripts in the army of Xerxes as "Phrygian colonists," describes them as equipped with plaited helmets and carrying small shields and spears, as well as javelins and daggers, with high boots to protect their feet as they and Xerxes' 1,700,000 soldiers on 3,000 ships landed in Greece in 480 B.C.

The roots of the Armenian people lie in the ruins of Urartu, a kingdom which had flourished around Lake Van in what is now Eastern Turkey from the 13th century B.C. until its overthrow in the 7th century B.C. The Armenians were the progeny of the subjugated Uartians and the invading Cimmerians, Scyths, and Medes; they emerge about a century later as a distinct ethnic group who remained under the rule of neighboring states, principally Persia, until early in the 2nd

century B.C. when they revolted under King Artashes and established, under Roman consent, the first Armenian state.

During the Reign of Tigranes II the Great, from c. 94 to c. 56 B.C., Armenia ascended to a power unique in its history, a power that proved to be as nebulous as it was brief, as the empire of Tigranes succumbed to the rise of Rome and became – and remains for more than four centuries – a pawn in the rivalry between Rome and Persia.

Like most ancient peoples, the primitive ancestors of Armenians were probably nature worshippers. In a late Armenian saga, a child's birth is announced thus:

“Through the reed-pipe came forth smoke,
Through the reed-pipe came forth flame,
And through the flame a laddie ran.”

This mythical association of reeds with childbirth goes back to Moses – who was found among the reeds along a riverbank – and further still. The African Zulu believes God “sprang from a reed on the river's brink.” In an old Babylonian legend of creation, man was formed from dust poured into an ark made of reeds and set upon the waters – again a variation on the biblical story of the birth of Moses. Among ancient Armenians – as among other peoples of Africa, the islands of the Pacific, and Europe – a reed tied over the entrance to a hut announced the birth of a child, a custom which continues today in one form or another in some parts of the world.

Perhaps because it straddles the continents of Europe and Asia, Armenia has, over the course of centuries, felt the influence of nearly all major religions, both primitive and contemporary. Like their Aryan antecedents, the primitive Armenians revered the oak with its myth of The King of the Wood and its fabled Golden Bough, mistletoe, the parasitic growth of the oak which even today retains its charm, if not its magic, as a symbol.

As the Armenians first merged into a distinct people, the principal gods were Mithra, the Persian god of the Invincible Sun, and his female consort Anahita, the goddess of

fertility. For a time, but only to a limited extent, Zoroastrianism, which also centered on sun worship, replaced Mithra. (Both of these pagan religions, incidentally, paralleled the religion of Ikhnaton, the Egyptian King of a thousand years before, who first introduced the idea of monotheism in Aton, the sun god.) Finally, when Alexander the Great conquered Armenia, the Greek gods were adopted under Armenian names.

Remnants of these earlier religions survive today in personal names (Mihran), in legend (the snake in tales of Armenia's conversion is not very different from that in the story of St. Patrick's conversion of Ireland), in custom (the orientation of churches probably antedates the cult of Mithra), and in holiday (the midsummer rose festival can be traced back as far as Anahita). But, of course, these are only remnants. The great religious event in the history of Armenia – as it was in the history of so many peoples – took place not many days' walk from Mount Ararat in a tiny village where a child whose family name has been lost to history and is known by the title, Jesus Christ, was born.

It is not known precisely when or how or in what form Christianity reached Armenia. This is curious only in retrospect. Then, as today, historians were more attracted by the flamboyance of a Caesar than by the simplicity of a Christ; in a word, historians are snobs. We can be certain nonetheless that Christianity grew more by osmosis than by a sudden change of wind. According to tradition, Armenian Christianity was founded by the apostles St. Thaddeus and St. Bartholomew. Admittedly, the evidence is fragmentary and inconclusive, but no more so than the claim by the Roman church of St. Peter as its founder. Furthermore, in Greece and Rome at that time, there were scholars to keep written records while Armenia was still struggling toward an alphabet. In any event, the apostolic origin of Armenian Christianity is generally recognized by other Christian churches; and the fact is that Christianity appeared in Armenia certainly by the second or third century, and probably before.

The conversion of the whole of Armenia, that is, the adoption of Christianity as the official state religion, came about at the beginning of the fourth century through a violent twist of irony. In about 238, the king Tiridates II was assassinated by the prince Anak, a relative who was himself assassinated not long afterward. The twin deaths left fatherless both the future king Tiridates III and Gregory, the son of Anak. In the decades which followed, the young Tiridates found asylum in Rome until, in 287, he returned to Armenia and regained his throne. Gregory, who had also returned home from exile and was not only an assassin's son but a Christian, was discovered by the king, tortured, and incarcerated in a dungeon for twelve years or longer before being finally released. In the meantime, the king had gradually succumbed to a mental illness known as lycanthropy in which, according to folklore, the victim assumes the form of an animal such as a werewolf or, in the case of Tiridates, a boar. (Today, psychologists would probably diagnose his illness as a psychosis causing him to assume the behavior, but certainly not the physique, of a boar, stripping the legend of its romance but not its fact.) Searching a cure, Tiridates reluctantly turned to his enemy Gregory and the hated God of the Christians. Gregory's efforts and prayers succeeded and led, in about 301, to Tiridates' proclamation of Christianity as the state religion and to the election of Gregory as the first Catholicos of Armenia.

Thus some twelve years before the Roman emperor Constantine the Great, on the eve of battle, saw in the sky over the river Tiber in Rome a cross inscribed with the words, "In this sign thou shalt conquer" – an event which resulted in Christianity being accepted as a lawful religion by Rome – Armenians had become the world's first nation to adopt Christianity as the official religion of the state. This act by Tiridates and Gregory the Illuminator not only cemented the bond of nationhood among Armenians, but created a permanent gulf between them and their neighbors, principally Persia and, later on, the Ottoman Turks. During the following centuries, as Armenia lost its last shred of political indepen-

dence, and was fought over time and again by one country or another, Christianity nevertheless remained the national religion. Each conqueror, as they are wont to do even today, tried to assimilate the Armenians by forcing on them another religion. During one such attempt in 451, St. Vartan Mamikonian, after whom the cathedral in New York is named, was slain in a battle with the Persians which ended with the Persians renouncing their plans to convert Armenia to Zoroastrianism. The next thousand years saw the boundaries of Armenia shift back and forth, its separateness, if not its independence, as a state precariously maintained until the last king of Armenia died in 1393 and, in 1453, the capture of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks spelled doom for Armenia's political aspirations.

For Western Europe, the fifteenth century was an auspicious and spectacularly eventful time. In Italy, it was the beginning of the Renaissance, the time of Da Vinci and Michelangelo. From Spain, Isabella sent Columbus on his journey to America. England was digesting Chaucer. Germany's Gutenberg produced the first known books printed by movable type. For Armenia, however, the fifteenth century marked the dusk of the long Islamic night.

During the next several hundred years, the Armenians were caught in the cross-fire of war between the Turks and the Persians until, in the early nineteenth century, Russia advanced into the Caucasus. Under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, non-Moslems were permitted by Moslem sacred law to practice their own religion, but under conditions described by H.A.R. Gibb and Harold Bowen in the following excerpt from Islamic Society and the West.

"By the terms of this contract with the Dimmis (infidels) the Moslem ruler guarantees their lives, their liberties, and to some extent their property, and allows them to practice their religion. The Dimmis in return undertake to pay the special poll-tax, called Cizya, and the land tax called Harac, and agree to suffer certain restrictions that mark them out as a caste inferior to that of their Moslem fellow subjects.

“These restrictions are of various kinds. In the first place Dimmis are at a disadvantage legally in comparison with Moslems: for instance, their evidence is not accepted against that of a Moslem in a Kadis courts; the Moslem murderer of a Dimmi does not suffer the death penalty; a Dimmi man may not marry a Moslem woman, whereas a Moslem man may marry a Dimmi woman. In the second place, Dimmis are obliged to wear distinctive clothes so that they may not be confused with true believers, and are forbidden to ride horses or to carry arms. Finally, though their churches may be, and in practice have frequently been, converted into mosques, they are not to build new ones. The most they may do is to repair those that have fallen into decay.”

In sum, the Armenians who lived under Moslem law enjoyed civil rights somewhat broader than the untouchables of India, and roughly similar to those allocated Jews in Europe and the emancipated Negro of America. As with these groups, moreover, “civil rights” meant little more than privileges at best, subject to official whim.

With the new influence of Russia and the liberal thought of Western Europe, however, Armenians at long last began to chafe under foreign rule. In 1863, a special Armenian constitution was recognized by the Ottoman government, but reforms were slow in coming. As other nations – Great Britain, France, and Russia – became interested in the “Armenian question,” the Turkish sultan Abdul-Hamid II promised, in 1895, to press again for reform. Instead, massacres, which had already been going on for some time with the support of the sultan, became the order of the day. At least one hundred thousand Armenians were slaughtered before the century was out. The governments of Europe, as governments nearly always do, enunciated outrage rather than reach for their guns.

Death did not stop with the dawn of the new century; in 1909, 30,000 Armenians were massacred in Cilicia. Nevertheless, there was, for one brief moment, a precarious new vitality and freedom as Armenians partook in a cultural and educational renaissance under a new Turkish regime. It might

have continued longer were it not for the incredibly involved political maneuverings in the rest of Europe. Nationalism was taking on the force of religion; alliances had split Europe into hostile camps; commercial and colonial ambitions caused an armaments race; and the dissatisfaction of racial minorities and underprivileged classes had reached the boiling point. Those government officials in various countries who realized war was in the wind committed some of their worst blunders in clumsy attempts to avert it. Then, on June 28, 1914, Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian and Hungarian thrones, was assassinated by a young Serb fanatic in the Bosnian city of Sarajevo, and the rush to arms was on.

It would be inaccurate to claim that the World War, in its confusion and madness, somehow caused the massacres of 1915; rather it was that the war provided a convenient cover for a final settlement of the Armenian question. The Ottoman Empire had fallen upon hard times in recent years; her claims to Bulgaria and Bosnia Herzegovina had been lost in 1908; and she had lost most of her European possessions to Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, and the new state of Albania. Turkey was in no mood to reform herself. Those Armenians who had begun to hope for a better life under the new rule of Young Turks realized the night had lasted too long for light to be admitted now.

The year 1915 had come.

In December 1914, Turkey had begun a first assault against the Russians. For a few weeks, they advanced successfully in the Caucasus but by January they had been thrown into full retreat. As a scapegoat for their defeat, Turkey blamed the Armenians, some of whom had fought Turkey as Russian subjects. If Russian Armenians fought them, so the argument went, Turkish Armenians were equally suspect.

In late January 1915, Turkish army commanders were ordered to disarm all Armenians in their ranks, regrouping them in "labor battalions." Simultaneously, Armenian civilians were also disarmed, and all male Armenians between the ages of 15 and 60 were ordered conscripted. The net effect of

these moves was to reduce or eliminate the ability of Armenians to fight back when the slaughter began. These moves also demonstrate that the settlement of the Armenian question was a matter of careful planning rather than a sudden fit of rage.

Once the Armenians had been disarmed, the settlement of the Armenian question went quickly, methodically. On the night of April 24, 1915, some 1,000 prominent Armenians in Constantinople were arrested and later shipped under guard to the country's interior, where they were murdered. Within six months, all but a few hundred thousand of the more than two million Armenians had been uprooted from their homes and either deported or, as was the case with most, murdered.

In the book "The Treatment of Armenians," the British Lord Bryce summarized the slaughtering process:

"On a certain date, in whatever town or village it might be (and the dates show a significant sequence), the public crier went through the streets announcing that every male Armenian must present himself forthwith at the Government building. In some cases the warning was given by the soldiery or gendarmerie slaughtering every male Armenian they encountered on the streets ... The men presented themselves in their working clothes, leaving their shops and work-rooms open, their ploughs in the field, their cattle on the mountainside. When they arrived, they were thrown without explanation into prison, kept there a day or two, and then marched out of the town in batches, roped man to man, along some southerly or southeasterly road. They were starting, they were told, on a long journey – to Mosul or perhaps Baghdad ... But they had not long to ponder over their plight, for they were halted and massacred at the first lonely place on the road. The same process was applied to those Armenian men who had been imprisoned during the winter months on the charge of conspiracy or concealment of arms ... This was the civil authorities' part, but there was complete co-ordination between Talaat Bey's Ministry of the Interior and Enver Pasha's Ministry of War, for simultaneously the Armenian Labor

Battalions, working behind the front, were surrounded by detachments of their combatant fellow soldiers and butchered in cold blood.”

This matter-of-fact summary is necessarily without the particular, personal touches of madness. Picture, for example, a boy’s throat being slit by another boy as the neighbors cheer. The dead boy’s sisters are taken away to harems. The mother is cruelly left alive.

In the city of Zeitun, the entire Armenian population was “deported.” A United Press reporter, writing in August of 1915, describes what happened then: “They were herded across the country by soldiers in groups ranging from fifty to several hundred. Old men who were unable to maintain the fast pace set by the mounted soldiers were beaten till they fell dead in their tracks. Children who were likewise too tender to stand the terrible strain dropped out by the wayside, while the mothers were driven relentlessly on with no hopes of ever again being able to find their little ones. Other mothers with babies in arms, unable to see the latter die under their very eyes, unable to give them the nourishment necessary to sustain life, and unable to bear the agony of leaving them by the wayside to an unknown fate, dropped them in wells as they passed, thus ending the sufferings of the little ones and having at least the consolation of knowing their fate.”

At Mush, the settlement was burned to the ground and the bodies of the dead were left, unburied, for the delectation of dogs and vultures.

Eyewitness observers later reported incidents comparable in horror: the eyebrows of the victims were plucked out, their breasts cut off, their nails torn off – “all done at night time and, in order that the people may not hear their screams and know of their agony, soldiers are stationed around the prisons beating drums and blowing whistles.”

The incidents were as numerous as the victims. A mother offers herself to a physician in exchange for aspirin for her son’s fever. Soldiers push women into a river or over a precipice to save bullets. A group of deportees are urged by

priests to sing as they walk to their doom. The empty trails are littered with leaves of the Bible fallen from dying hands. A group of soldiers, watching a corpse float by in the river, laughingly recognizes it as the body of a young girl they had raped earlier in the day. A Danish Red Cross nurse writes home: "One day we met a convoy of exiles, who had said goodbye to their prosperous villages and were at that moment on their way to Kemakh Bogha Boghaz. We had to draw up a long time by the roadside while they marched past. The scene will never be forgotten by either of us: a very small number of elderly men, a large number of women – vigorous figures with energetic features – a crowd of pretty children, some of them fair and blue-eyed, one little girl smiling at the strangeness of all she was seeing, but on all the other faces the solemnity of death. There was no noise; it was all quiet, and they marched along in an orderly way, the children generally riding on the ox-carts; and so they passed, some of them greeting us on the way ..."

So, twenty-five hundred years after they had been conceived as the progeny of refugees, the Armenian people – those still alive – of Turkish Armenia, became themselves refugees.

It took years, ten years and longer, before the refugees found other homes. At long last, world opinion was aroused, but indignation was muffled by the war and its own terrible aftermath. In the meantime, diplomats made treaties with one another, and when the treaties were violated, they made others. In 1918, the Allies established an independent Republic of Armenia; like Camelot, however, it lasted for only one brief, shining moment. By late 1920, the small, starving republic – its status newly confirmed by the Treaty of Sevres in August, 1920 – was set upon by the Turks. Rather than be swallowed up once more, the Armenians elected to join the Soviet Union. As for the rights of Armenians and other Christian minorities within Turkey itself, the Allies exchanged these for oil rights at the Lausanne Conference in 1923. During the same period, and continuing until 1930, the America-based

Near East Relief Committee spent \$166,000,000 helping the refugees, including the establishment of 47 orphanages and 65 hospitals. In the end, the Armenian refugees were scattered across the Middle East and Europe and throughout the world. They went to Lebanon, Syria, Iran, Trans-Jordan, Jerusalem, Kuwait, and Egypt; they went to Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Chile; they went to London, Brussels, and Paris; and they came, thousands of them, to America.

Behind the refugees, inevitably, lay the relics of a civilization which had once been the greatest nation in Western Asia, which had placed thirteen of their number on the throne of the Eastern Empire, and which had a culture when most Europeans were savages. There was much they could take with them, but there were other things they would not see again, at least not soon.

If a sociologist were to dissect the Armenian nation, he would discover three main characteristics which both distinguished the Armenian personality and formed the bonds of the Armenian nation. The first of these, obviously, was and is religion. The Armenian has been more stubborn than most in matters of religion. One historian wrote, "As with the Jews, their ecclesiastical obstinacy was at once their danger and their strength; it left them friendless but it enabled them to survive political extinction." At the same time, the Armenian Church is more democratic than, for example, the Roman Church which is only now painfully working toward participation of the laity in church matters, a participation Armenians have taken for granted for centuries. Perhaps it is this democracy which accounts for the lack of rigidity in Armenian theology, which holds only dogmas, the few fundamental truths, as an irreducible minimum, and allows modification of specific doctrines as thought and knowledge expand. Of necessity, the church is today international in scope, but no less national in character; it may be compared more accurately with the Church of England when the Church encompassed the British Empire, than with the Church of Rome, which can hardly be called the Italian Church.

The rise of Christianity had a profound influence on the second of these national bonds, language. Until the beginning of the fifth century, the Armenian language was entirely oral; scholars and others who were literate read in the Greek and Syriac languages. In 404, St. Mesrop-Mashtots, a Christian scholar, devised an ingenious alphabet which corresponded to the spoken language. The alphabet contains thirty-six characters (later increased to thirty-eight) which together represented all the sounds of the Armenian language. With this one stroke of genius, Mesrop not only attained his immediate objective – to evangelize with written religious instructions – but also made possible a national liturgy, introduced literacy to the Armenian people and laid the foundation for a native literature. Only a century later, the golden age of Armenian literature began; in contrast, English literature did not emerge on its own until two centuries later. (The Bible was translated into Armenian by 433 and into English by about 1525). Fifteen hundred years later, Mesrop's alphabet is still in use. Of the language itself, the poet Lord Byron once said that "the only language to speak to God is Armenian."

Literature itself is part of the third bond, art, which has given expression to all the Armenian spirit has felt over the centuries. Literature meant books, and books meant illustrations. The earliest Armenian paintings – mosaics and frescoes – date from the first Christian churches, but it is through illuminated manuscripts that painting evolved and reached its highest point. From the ninth to the thirteenth century, the special art flourished in Armenia until it ranked with the best of medieval illumination. However, the supreme – and, because we are here concerned with the consecration of a cathedral, the most important – achievement of Armenian art has been in architecture. Aside from a few ruins such as the temple of Garni, very little survives of the pagan architecture of Armenia. For all practical purposes then, the history of Armenian architecture begins with the conversion to Christianity, and almost simultaneously the construction of the Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin at the beginning of the

fourth century. Although the church has since undergone at least two major reconstructions, its foundations indicate the centralized plan, crowned with a conical dome, that later became the classic design of Armenian church architecture. The triumph of Armenian architecture, nonetheless, is at Ani, an ancient city which, during the tenth century became a royal capital and, consequently, the largest and richest city in Armenia. The Cathedral of Ani, completed in 1001, was the masterpiece of the architect Trdat, the same architect who repaired the dome of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople after a devastating earthquake. Armenian architecture, and particularly the Cathedral of Ani, holds an important place in medieval architecture, suggesting in many ways what was to come later in the Romanesque and Gothic styles of Western Europe. Ani is now deserted. For many years foreign visitors were forbidden altogether; lately, however, the regulations have been relaxed somewhat by Turkish officials. One recent visitor complained the ruins were being sadly neglected: "Hoopoes haunting the ruins perch on fallen lintels, and in the vegetation you stub a foot on 11th century carving. One cannot but wonder how long these buildings will survive, half-open to the winds of heaven and exposed to the depredations of the peasantry. Their architectural importance is difficult to exaggerate. The solution of the problem posed by the imposition of a circular dome upon a square base is here elegantly and effortlessly solved. Furthermore, antedating the Romanesque and Gothic of the West, these churches may have influenced both. Though this has been forcefully claimed, and as forcefully denied, their originality and the fascination of their setting are beyond question."

For the refugees, Ani and most of the other great architectural works of their country became no more than a memory, as indeed their own homes were also. Fortunately, religion is more portable than stone.

The first of the great wave of refugees to land in the United States after the great massacre were probably not surprised to find they were not, after all, the first Armenian

immigrants. Armenians, mainly students, had been emigrating to America since long before 1870. Between that year and the final exodus, thousands more had come to escape the periodic persecutions. In 1888, at the request of the Armenian colony in Worcester, Mass., the Very Reverend Hovsep Sarajian arrived to lead the church community. The first celebration of the Divine Liturgy was held in a rented hall on July 12, 1889. A few years later, on January 18, 1891, the Worcester community consecrated the first Armenian Church in America in the name of the Holy Savior, and by 1898 the American Diocese of the Armenian Church became a reality. In America, then, a home-away-from-home was waiting and would eventually become their new, permanent home. In New York City, the Armenian quarter was near the site of the new Cathedral, in the old brownstones of the East 20's and 30's. There were other colonies in Boston, in California and, of course, Worcester. America has traditionally been the land of welcoming arms, of hope. Few immigrants have needed so much of both as those refugees who struggled down the ramp at Ellis island, their eyes still glazed with the sight of a parent slaughtered before them, their ears still ringing with the scream of a child being dragged away from his mother, their throats still hoarse with the songs they had sung on the long road they thought could end only in death.

As the new immigrants settled into their new life, they became Americans while remaining Armenian. They watched as the children of earlier Armenian immigrants made their name in the world. One such, William Saroyan, went on to become one of the most acclaimed playwrights and novelists in American literature. Then came World War II, and their own children prepared to fight once more, now for America. (Curiously, the most celebrated literary figure to emerge from that war, a certain Major Yossarian, was Armenian.) Finally, in 1945, it was time to look back on how far they had come, and decide where they want to go. They were as much at peace as their new country was. They had gotten a foothold on life

again; they had struggled through the depression, their children had returned from the war. They had survived.

More often than not during those first years in America, their only places of worship were basements or storefronts or borrowed churches. Other Armenian churches had been built in America since the first one in Worcester, but more were needed. What was needed even more, to give the Armenian community in America a sense of unity, to emphasize the place religion had always had in Armenian life, was a cathedral.

The idea of the cathedral had already been conceived by the late Catholicos Karekin Hovsepian when he was primate here. In 1942, he introduced the idea to the wartime Diocesan Assembly, and after his election to Catholicos, the task was left to his successors. (Actually, an assembly held in 1926 had appropriated \$100,000 toward building a cathedral, but the money went the way of money during the depression years, and the idea of a cathedral was forgotten.) In January, 1945, with the war not yet over, the Diocesan Assembly, meeting in Boston, officially decided to build a cathedral in New York City. One wonders whether the members of the Assembly then realized it would be another generation before the dream came true. In any event, the project went steadily ahead.

As with any such project, the first task was raising the money. In 1946, at a dinner honoring Bishop Nersoyan's return from a visit to Soviet Armenia, a group of guests made the first \$70,000 donation. Shortly after, a dinner for Armenian veterans yielded pledges of \$20,000 more. As had happened in 1926, the fund-raising for the cathedral was interrupted almost immediately in favor of an emergency campaign to help Armenians who wished to return to Soviet Armenia. In the spring of 1947, Bishop Nersoyan launched the cathedral project anew in a radio appeal for contributions, pleading, "How long will the glory of our church remain invisible in the air"? The first poster appeared that May, and the campaign was on. As the years passed, fund-raising efforts included a

“brick” campaign, house-to-house canvassing, cathedral “banks” for homes, and special events. Mayor Vincent Impelliteri of New York City was the guest speaker at a project dinner in 1950. Almost a decade later, at a mammoth outdoor bazaar on the cleared site of the cathedral, the guest speaker was the young Congressman John V. Lindsay, later to become Mayor.

An early treasury report in 1949 reported that donations totaled \$235,213.47. The projected cost at that time – before the cathedral had actually been designed – was \$1 million. Some rough costs were estimated in 1952 for donation purposes; but fifteen years later, when reconstruction was under way and inflation had taken its toll, the cost for the project as a whole had gone from \$1 million to well over \$3 million.

While some workers were raising money, others were spending it. The first parcels of land, comprising 15,500 square feet, were purchased by 1949. The site, along Second Avenue from Thirty-fifth to Thirty-fourth streets, was chosen for several reasons: the land, in an area of renewal, spurred by construction of the United Nations complex nearby, was still reasonably priced; plans for a Second Avenue subway line, and easy access through the Queens Midtown Tunnel to Long Island, made it convenient; and it was near the heart of the city’s former Armenian quarter. The cost of the complete site, including ten separate properties for a total of 25,478 square feet, was \$616,601.01. Its value today is probably three times the purchase price.

Demolition of the site began in late April of 1958. Six months later, the cornerstone of the Diocesan House was blessed by the Primate, Archbishop Sion Manoogian. In January, 1959, the cornerstone was laid and the complete building was dedicated in November of the same year. The Diocesan House, the first unit of the cathedral complex to be completed, was designed by architect Zareh Saurian and the firm of Eggers and Higgins. A three-story building, the Diocesan House serves as headquarters for the Diocese of the Armenian Church of

America, which takes in Canada and all of the United States except California, Mexico and Cuba.

A few years after the Diocesan House was completed, in 1963, the contract for design of the cathedral and cultural center was awarded to the New York architectural firm of Steinman, Cain & White, with Edward Utudjian of Paris – one of three architects entrusted with the restoration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem – as consultant. Another two years went by as architectural and financial plans were studied and revised. Finally, on May 2, 1965, ground was broken and on October 2, 1966, the cornerstone, designed and sculpted in Armenia, was laid. Senator Jacob Javits of New York was among the guests at the cornerstone laying ceremony, at which Archbishop Manoogian officiated. On October 21, 1967, the Gullabi Gulbenkian Cultural Center was dedicated, including its Haik and Alice Kavookjian Auditorium. Then, at long last, the new Armenian Cathedral of St. Vartan was consecrated on Sunday, April 28, 1968, by His Holiness, Vasken I, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians.

The cathedral's architectural plan is patterned after the fourth-century church of St. Hripsime in Armenia, and includes two distinctive features of Armenian Church architecture. The first is the use of double-intersecting arches to span in the interior space, eliminating the need for the supporting columns familiar in other types of churches. In early Armenian churches, these arches were stone; for St. Vartan's, the architects substituted steel, which eliminated the need for massive supporting walls. The second feature is the pyramidal dome which soars 120 feet above the street level. The dome is supported by a drum, 27 feet high and 45 feet in diameter, which is supported in turn by the intersecting arches. Around the dome are painted various Christian symbols: the Armenian equivalent of "I am"; the eye, set within a triangle, representing the omniscience of the Triune God; the figure of Jesus Christ; the Holy Spirit represented by a dove; a ship for the Church; the Greek letters alpha and omega superimposed

on the scriptures, symbolizing God as the beginning and end of all things; wheat and grapes represented the Eucharist; a heart, an anchor and a cross symbolizing love, hope and faith; the Phoenix, the legendary bird of reincarnation, symbolizing resurrection. The artist Bogdan Grom depicted scenes of the story of the creation in the eight pierced windows of the drum; for the skylight windows, he chose to represent symbolically the four evangelists Matthew (the Angel-man), Mark (the Lion), Luke (the Ox), and John (the Eagle). The same symbols, incidentally, appear in the design of the door handles of the church.

Below the dome, a series of high, narrow, stained-glass windows, each crowned with a rounded arch, are set into the main walls of the cathedral. Two of the windows depict scenes in the life of Christ – the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Baptism, the Passion, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. Another set of windows depicts scenes from the Book of Genesis and the early history of Christianity in Armenia, including the settling of Noah's Ark on Mt. Ararat and portraits of the Apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew as well as Santookht, the first woman martyr in Armenian history; the prophet Ezekiel is shown with an angel reaching out toward the skeletons below, commemorating the two million Armenians massacred by the Turks in 1915; the patron saint of the cathedral, St. Vartan, is depicted fighting the Persians who threatened the Armenian Church during the fifth century; the invention of the Armenian alphabet is remembered in portraits of St. Sahag and St. Mesrop; the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.), which produced the Nicene Creed, is illustrated in three scenes from the Council; finally, the spirit of ecumenism is symbolized in the portrait of St. Nerses and the crosses of Christendom.

So the great cathedral was finished. And, on a warm Sunday in the spring of 1968, it was consecrated. At the consecration ceremonies, the celebrant was His Holiness Vasken I, the present Catholicos, the 130th in succession. He was born Levon Garabed Baljian on September 20, 1908 in Bucharest.

His family had come to Rumania from Constantinople during the massacres of 1896. On September 30, 1943, he was ordained a “vartabed” (a doctor in the priesthood of the Armenian Church) in Athens, and became acting primate of the Diocese of Rumania. He rose quickly in the hierarchy of the church until, in 1955, he was elected pontiff. Much of his time since has been spent in pastoral tours to South America, the Middle East, India, Ethiopia, and the United States. Assisting the Catholicos was Bishop Torkom Manoogian, who was elevated to Archbishop during the ceremonies by the Catholicos. He was born in Baghdad on February 16, 1919, ordained in 1939, and came to the United States in 1946 to assume the pastorate of the Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Philadelphia. Five years later, Archbishop Tiran named him Vicar General of the Diocese of America. Since then, he has held various posts as the Dean of the Theological School in Jerusalem, as primate of the Western (California) Diocese (during which period he was consecrated a bishop), and finally, in 1966, as primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America.

Also present at the consecration were those who were survived. For them the consecration was perhaps, more than anything else an elegy for the life that was lost, and a celebration of the life to come. If the ghost of Adolf Hitler were also present, he might have remembered his own words of 1939, defending his plans for genocide: “Who after all speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?”

On that day the voices spoke. He would have had his answer.

E N D