

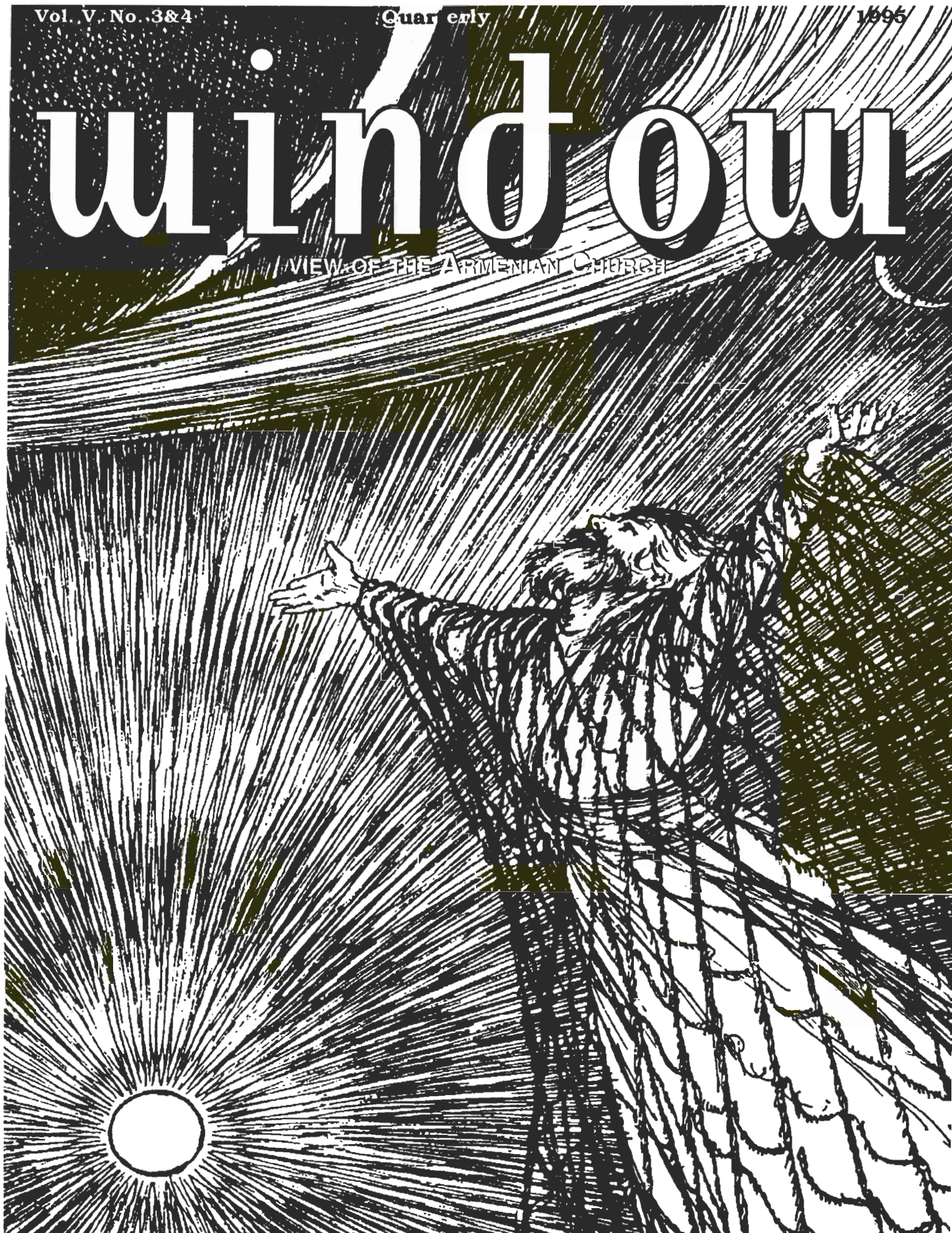
Vol. V No. 3&4

Quarterly

1995

Window

VIEW OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH





Window view of the Armenian Church

Volume V Number 3&4 — 1995

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Cover: *Man caught in the cosmic net.*

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THE ARMENIAN CHURCH
RESEARCH & ANALYSIS
GROUP (ACRAG)

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P.O. Box 700664,
San Jose, CA 95170



Redirecting the Window Light

Fr. Vazken Movsesian

With this issue of *Window*, the Armenian Church Research and Analysis Group (ACRAG) celebrates the fifth anniversary of its publication: *Window view of the Armenian Church*. In so doing, we close the pages of *Window* in the form we see today.

It is with mixed emotions that we pen this last editorial for *Window Quarterly*. On the one hand, it may seem strange as to why, in the height of *Window's* success, we have opted to direct its light of the Armenian Church in a different direction; and on the other hand, we feel a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction in having reached our goals. We started *Window* with a commitment to publish it for three years, four issues per year. Through the loyal support of our readers, we were encouraged to surpass the time frame we had set for ourselves. After five years, we are satisfied to close this *window* and begin opening new ways of viewing and effectuating change in the Armenian Church.

Unlike conventional thinking, we do not believe that a project or a publication should go on "forever" just because it is financially self-sufficient, successful or "doing a good job." We believe that projects should constantly be evaluated in light of their relevancy to the times. The priorities and objectives of the community are not the same as they were five years ago. As such, we believe that it is time to move on.

The last five years were among the most significant years of the Armenian Church. While the independence of Armenia is the most historic event for the nation, during the last five years:

- All four Hierarchical Sees of the Armenian Church— Etchmiadzin, Cilicia, Jerusalem and Constantinople— elected new patriarchs.
- An international conference of Armenian clergy was held.
- Eight new bishops were consecrated for important communities in Europe, North America and South America.
- Two new seminaries and two theological institutions were founded in Armenia.
- The National Ecclesiastical Assembly of the Armenian Church convened for the first time in forty years.

We were honored and proud to be a part of this unique period in the life of the Church by providing coverage and analysis of these developments. While the events of the last five years were certainly filled with occasions for growth, we were disappointed that the opportunities for reform and change were never ceased. Today, our Church life continues in an abyss of stagnation, making us conclude, sadly, that the time was wrong, the conditions were wrong and, most importantly, the faith was wrong to effectuate a major change in the Armenian Church. So long as Christ and God's creative presence are not allowed to work within the Church, the Church cannot live the reformation it needs. We must be willing to accept this reality. However, our inability to change the circumstances does not dimin-

Window took off beyond our expectations. People began speaking of change in the Church... But how long could we continue?

ish our capacity to care for it.

The path to opening Window in the Church was a blessed one. It was with the encouragement of the late Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan that we laid the foundation for Window. Archbishop Nersoyan hoped to begin a theological quarterly with our editorship. Unfortunately he passed away without realizing this dream. A few months after his passing we pushed ourselves to take some action upon his wish. More than a theological journal, we sought a means of creating a forum for critical analysis of our Church, with theological, administrative and pastoral perspectives.

While Window was still in its conceptual stage, we had to make an important decision: where was the best possible place to begin our endeavor, with the ultimate goal of effectuating change in the Church? To bring about change from the outside would inevitably mean a further division within the Church and an entrance into an already crowded arena of Armenian Church bashers and parenthetical churches. We opted to effectuate change from within. Given the reality of a hierarchy-controlled institution, this was not a comfortable decision for us, nevertheless, we firmly believed (and continue to do so) that it is only from within that we can preserve the integrity of the Church.

Our working premise was that

the Armenian Church is founded by Jesus Christ. Throughout history, the real shakers and movers of the Church, moved it from within. The saints, to whom we pay mere lip service today, were real disciples who brought about the necessary reform in their day and age. Whether it was St. Gregory the Illuminator, St. Gregory of Datev, Simon Yerevantzi or in recent history Patriarch Torkom Koushagian of Jerusalem, or contemporary figures such as Archbishop Nersoyan, their lasting effects on the Church are counted today because they worked from within.

We also realized that we were not the first to embark upon such a venture. In fact, Jesus himself, angered by the plight of the formal institution, brought about the first 'reform'—the establishment of a living faith rather than institutionalized religion. Since then, anyone who has dared to take seriously the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and juxtapose them to the living reality of the Church has been compelled to speak in terms of reformation. But, at what cost? Martin Luther attempted to reform the Roman Catholic Church only to be confounded by the institution, giving way to the Protestant Reformation.

Furthermore, the Church is a community. Any talk of reforming the Church must invariably include a commentary on refor-

mation of the community.

There was no choice in the matter, change had to come from within and that is where we began our work.

During the past five years we have opened the Window on many issues. The perspectives that we presented from within and without the church were candid, evaluative, challenging and controversial. Our first issue was eight pages. We did not anticipate the response we received and Window took off beyond our expectations. By the third issue, we were already reaching an international audience. People began speaking of change in the Church. Among the hundreds of letters we received there was a reoccurring theme: a publication such as Window was sorely needed in the community. Window analyzed, criticized and most importantly, presented solutions. Window developed in quantity and quality, becoming a "mirror" and a challenge to the Armenian Church hierarchy, clergy, and lay leadership, and a forum for the silent majority in the Church. But for how long could we continue?

The basic need to return the Church to its spiritual mission is at the core of all the ails of the Church. We arrived at a point where no matter how small or large the particular focus of our analysis, the conclusion was the same: the only hope for the Armenian Church is a return to her apostolic mission, where the focus of her activities are larger than the people that run it.

Identifying problems in the Church also allowed us an opportunity to transform them into challenges. We are proud to say that the pages of Window never resorted to the tabloidish antics so prevalent in the Armenian press. Church unity, women in the Church, use of languages other than Armenian in the Church are all secondary issues. They continuously surface in the

Armenian press as a convenient diversion of our attention from the primary issues. If Christ were at the center of the Church, unity would take place tomorrow, there would not be enough power on Earth to keep women out of the Church and the liturgy would transcend language. These and other issues cannot be seriously addressed, unless Christ's centrality in the life of the Church is taken seriously.

In order for the Church to actualize its purpose and goals, we must be willing to take an active role. To this end, it is beyond the scope of Window to mobilize the children of the Church toward change. But the time has now come.

Today, the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church is being run by a handful of hierarchs who are driven by ambition, egos that need *to be served* rather than *to serve*, and are out of touch with the day to day reality of the Church's membership. They are very comfortable sitting on their thrones and will fight any type of change which will buck the status quo. Meanwhile, the Church continues to sink deeper into the ditch of irrelevance, losing members and finding no functionality apart from a place to offer prayers for the dead.

Throughout the years, we have insisted that we have no one to blame for the current situation but ourselves—the members of the Church. We have invited members to activism but have been confounded in the very structure of the Church. We are quick to claim the democracy of the Armenian Church, but do not exercise its privilege. Perhaps it is because democracy in the Church is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it is the best of all possible models because it provides lay and clergy input in the life of the Church, but at the same time, it invites a disproportional amount of politicking. The Church hierarchs have not at-

Church unity, Women in the Church, use of non-Armenian languages, conveniently divert our attention from the primary issue

tained their positions of power by virtue of holiness, but rather because of their shrewdness and ability to politic the masses. And so, we continue to elect men who are driven by ambition into the very nerve center of the Armenian Church. What good can come of this?

Furthermore, members of the Church are more concerned with form than substance. Appearance is everything to the members of the Armenian Church. How often do we judge a church by its outward appearance rather than the work it is accomplishing from within? How many priests are called to serve the church because of their "beautiful" voices? How many bishops and catholicos are elevated to their thrones because of their wonderful oratory skills or political power? Equally as important is the question: how many priests, bishops, catholicos are out there championing the causes of justice and truth? Sadly, not enough.

Because we lack the confidence in our role in the democratic process and because we have lost sight of the Holy Mission of the Church, we continue to use superficial criteria for judgement and are happily satisfied by mediocrity. The Church suffers and so do we. Who do we have to blame but ourselves?

The Armenian Church is the Church of Jesus Christ. To exploit the cliché God cared enough to send His very best. At what point

do we begin accepting the tremendous responsibility of being trusted with the Holy Church and demand that our clergy accept the call to service rather than self-glorification? When do we stop accepting the unsubstantiated notion that the Church is some tool for the Armenian nation in its quest for sovereignty? When do we become intolerant of clergy who equate the kingdoms of men to the Kingdom of God?

The time is here and the time has come for us to move from identifying our challenges to accepting them. Window closes its pages in the form you see today. However, we will continue our analysis and movement for the growth of the Armenian Church—Christ's Church—utilizing different media that is available to us. Primarily, we will continue to publish on the internet at www.sain.org. By availing ourselves to modern technology we hope that new and greater opportunities will open before us to continue our work for the edification of the Church.

In closing, we thank all of you, our loyal readership for your continued support. We could not have kept Window open had it not been for you. On behalf of Hratch Tchilingirian, myself and the entire Window staff, thank you for your confidence in our work. We are humbled by your kind words and gestures.

Window: a different way of doing business

Window was more than a publication to its staff. The operation of Window became a way in which its founders envisioned the Church could work. Window became a phenomena not only for its content but also in the manner it provided information.

One of the most interesting aspects of publishing Window was its production mechanics. Through its 'global' network, all twenty issues of Window were produced in (what has now become to be called) cyberspace. The editors, contributors and production staff were never in the same room, or in the same geographic region for the production of an issue.

Our central computer in the Silicon Valley, USA, would distribute the work to Window staff members in San Jose, Los Angeles, New York, London and Rome. For example, during the last two years, when Sosi Topjian, our Administrative Assistant moved from San Francisco to Sweden, she continued to process subscriptions and correspondence electronically through the network; or when editor Hratch Tchilingirian moved from New York to London, it did not have the least impact on the production of Window.

The use of the latest technology and telecommunications is an important part of publishing Window. For example, during the Pontifical Election in Etchmiadzin (April 1995), Window provided a three-week coverage of the historic event on the Internet, reaching Armenian readers throughout the world. Our coverage of the election was extensively used by the Armenian media in the United States, Europe, the Middle East, Australia and Armenia. Likewise, when the Teotig database (Genocide archive) was compiled in 1991, notes and transcripts were sent daily between the editors and research staff, between Texas, Van Nuys and San Jose. The final product was a testament to the productivity that can be achieved through technological advancements.

The use of computers shaped our entire work philosophy and challenged us to exploit technology for the use of the Church. Just as the pen was a tool for Mesrob Mashdotz, the computer became a tool of choice for us at Window.

5 Year Stats

- 32 writers/contributors
- 25 exclusive interviews
- 67 original articles

As for circulation, we had a simple philosophy more attuned to economics than to theology: if our product was good, people would buy it. We are proud to have published Window for five years without ever having to appeal to raffles, Bingo games or dinner-dances. Window was supported solely by the readers' subscriptions who appreciated this "breath of fresh air."

Jesus said to them,
"When I sent you out
without a purse, bag, or
sandals, did you lack
anything?" They said,
"No, not a thing."

—(Luke 22:35)

ARMENIA AND THE VATICAN

Foreign Policy, the Armenian Church and the Diaspora

A Conversation with
Vahan Papazian
 Foreign Minister of the Republic of Armenia

by Hratch Tchilingirian

On March 25, 1995, the Republic of Armenia opened an Embassy at the Vatican. The formal ceremony was presided over by the Foreign Minister and his counterpart at the Vatican. The Vatican has an embassy in Armenia since 1992.

Q. Recently the Republic of Armenia opened an Embassy at the Vatican, could you give us some details about this mission?

PAPAZIAN: The opening of the Armenian Embassy in the Vatican was part of our ongoing efforts to establish relations with foreign countries. As such, it is not a major political move on our part.

It is an aim of our foreign policy to establish contacts with international structures, especially European institutions. As a successor to a former Soviet republic, we are members of the CIS—which is very important for us—and at the same time we are participating in other regional and functional organizations, for example the OSCE, Black Sea Cooperation Council, and in the future, we hope to participate in the ECO [Economic Cooperation Organization] as observers, and others. However, our immediate objective is to participate in the structures of the European Union—the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, etc. Of course, initially as an observer and then hopefully as a full member. From this perspective—why I am mentioning all these objectives—it is important for Armenia to deepen its diplomatic relations with the Vatican. Of course the Vatican is not a big state, but it has major influence on various countries and as such Armenian-Vatican relations are significant. It was with these intentions that we opened an Embassy in the Vatican.

Q. Is there an Armenian Ambassador in the Vatican?

PAPAZIAN: The Armenian Embassy at the Vatican is not like other embassies that we've established in other countries. I say this in the sense that there would not be a permanent ambassador sitting in the Vatican. Instead, Mr. Armen Sarkissian—our ambassador to Great Britain and Belgium—has also been certified to be ambassador to the Vatican. He will visit the Vatican a few times a year or as needed to have meetings with Vatican officials, or discuss various issues or carry out negotiations on behalf of the Republic of Armenia.

Q. How was your meeting with the Pope?

PAPAZIAN: My meeting with the Pope, together with our ambassador was important. During our meeting I presented to His Holiness the current situation in Armenia and Karabakh, and the processes related to the conflict in Karabakh. We explained to him how we see the political solution of the conflict. I believe we have his cooperation and understanding in this regard. We also met with other senior officials in the Vatican, with whom we discussed these issues in greater detail. We received assurances that the Vatican, through its channels, will help Armenia integrate into European structures.

Q. Were there any discussions about religious issues or inter-church relations?

PAPAZIAN: We did not discuss religious issues and I believe we should not. As a representative of the Republic of Armenia, it is not my place to discuss issues related to the Armenian Church. The Armenian Church is separate from the state and as such, I do not have the right to speak in the name of the Armenian Church with the Pope or with any other Vatican official. Of course people in the Vatican were interested in my personal opinions on religious issues—not as the Foreign Minister but as an Armenian individual. I would say we had rather an academic discussion on religious matters and that was the extent of it. Obviously, the Vatican is interested in religious matters in Armenia and I presented them my personal views.

I am aware of the subtext of your question, and let me say a few words about that. I do not believe that there is a sense of competition or opposition between the two churches. There should not be. The Armenian Apostolic Church is not any church. The Armenian Church is our National Church, and as such, she needs certain state support—in my opinion. It is another question whether the state has the capability to do so. Of course, our people has lived in the orbit of the Armenian Church for centuries and it will continue to do so. That is where we belong. Our religious, spiritual and church life will continue to be the way it has been throughout history.

Q. In this context, how do you characterize the role of the Armenian Church?

PAPAZIAN: Of course, I do not wish to interfere with the affairs of the Armenian Church—and I do not have any intention to interfere—but I believe and hope that

Etchmiadzin, as the religious center of the Armenian nation, will play a more active, practical and vital role in the life of our society. I believe this is essential in view of the fact that our society—having rid itself of Soviet controls, including the pressures that were put on the church—needs to fill this spiritual vacuum. Obviously, there are other spiritual sources in a given society, such as culture, science, etc., but the church should have its place in the life of the society as well.

So far, Etchmiadzin—in my opinion—has not been able to satisfy the religious needs of our people. This has caused some problems because when the church is unable to fill the spiritual vacuum of society, others will come and do the work. And we as a state will not fight against that. The state does not have the right to decide what faith or religion its citizens should adhere to. It is up to the national church to decide what to do and how to conduct its mission. This is my personal opinion.

Q. To continue in this vein, the 1991 law on freedom of conscience and religion contains several contradictions concerning the Armenian Church. On the one hand the law prescribes the separation of church and state and on the other gives the Armenian Church certain privileges. This is considered unfair by other churches or religious groups in Armenia.

PAPAZIAN: I agree with you that the law in this respect is not perfect. That law was accepted in 1991 when the Parliament was new and inexperienced. Let us not forget that Armenia is a new state, where national and political thought is in a process of development. In this respect, if there are contradictions in the law they will be refined in time. Personally, I am not involved with legis-

lative processes, that's the job of the parliament. However, I believe that contradictions in the law should be ironed out. Especially, as Foreign Minister, I think contradictions should be worked out in accordance with international principles. Our standards and principles should match internationally accepted principles. I believe that international principles accord the Armenian Church full opportunities to continue and deepen her historical and national role. We cannot resolve all problems by law.

Q. In the Diaspora, the Armenian Church has been a surrogate state for Armenians, at least until the Independence of Armenia. As Foreign Minister, how do you regard the Armenian Church in the Diaspora today?

PAPAZIAN: You are asking me a very complex question. Having been involved with these issues for the last three-four years, I think the issue is related to the various facets and internal structures of the Diaspora. The existing internal organization and structures in the Diaspora—including the church—are not sufficient enough to deal with contemporary national issues. Of course, I am an Armenian [resident of Armenia] and I might be mistaken—perhaps a Diaspora Armenian would better respond to these questions. I do not reserve the right to criticize, but this is my opinion.

As to what kind of changes or transformations are needed for the church to respond better to the needs of the people, that is up to the church to decide how it should make herself more attractive to the people.

As far as I am concerned, the objective should be the following (and this pertains not only to the church but also to other structures): the church has a

(continued on page 10)

POPE JOHN PAUL II'S ADDRESS TO THE ARMENIAN AMBASSADOR

On Sunday, March 25, H.E. Mr. Armen Sarkissian, Ambassador of Armenia to the Holy See, presented his credentials to H.H. Pope John Paul II.

The following is the text of the Pope's English-language address to the new ambassador.

Mr. Ambassador,

It is my pleasure to welcome you today to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence by which His Excellency President Levon Ter-Petrosian appoints you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Armenia to the Holy See. I am grateful for the greetings you bring from the President, and I would ask you to relay to the leaders and people of Armenia the assurance of my prayers for the harmony and prosperity of your country in the new stage of its national life. This is a significant occasion, as you are the first Ambassador of the newly independent Republic of Armenia to be officially accredited to the Holy See, in a special way, therefore, I wish to offer you my cordial good wishes for the success of your mission.

The Catholic Church looks with great respect at the long Christian tradition of the Armenian people and nation, which in the year 2001, as Your Excellency has pointed out, will celebrate the 1700th anniversary of their acceptance of Christianity. As the Armenian Church pre-

pares to elect the new Catholicos of all Armenians, my thoughts turn to the meeting of my predecessor Pope Paul VI with Armenian Catholicos Vasken I. In that historic moment of common prayer and fraternal dialogue, Paul VI marveled at how completely the Christian faith, "the light of the Gospel" had permeated Armenian culture, serving as a source of unflinching courage for the Armenian people as they endured numerous trials.

The memory of the tragedy visited upon your people at the close of the last century and in the first decades of our present century, as well as the awareness of similar atrocities being committed in various parts of the world, must serve to strengthen the conviction that violence is never a valid way of solving the disputes which arise between peoples; force can never provide lasting solutions of justice and peace.

It is in this light, and with a heavy heart, that I turn my thoughts to the present confrontation between your country and the Republic of Azerbaijan concerning the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. I express the hope that

both parties will spare no effort in arriving at a negotiated settlement and that everything will be done to ensure an immediate response to the urgent humanitarian needs of the affected populations. The conflicts now in course in the Caucasus region, as well as those in the Balkans, pose serious questions regarding what means may be used to ensure harmonious coexistence between different peoples. Clearly the way of negotiation, with the help of international institutions if necessary, is the only way to ensure that the legitimate demands and aspirations of all parties will be given their proper weight and attention.

As the Armenian people and Government press on with the democratic reforms and economic restructuring which their refound independence requires, the Catholic Church too will continue to offer whatever assistance and support is possible in accordance with her specific nature and mission. Just as the Church was able to respond to the disastrous 1988 earthquake in Armenia with humanitarian and including the donation of the Hospital "Redemptoris Mater" in

Ashotzk, so she wishes to contribute to the life of the nation through her works in the fields of education, healthcare and social service. This is the Church's way of fulfilling her mission of service in the world, working for transformation of society according to the teachings and example of her Divine Founder.

Accordingly, it is not the Church's desire that she should enjoy special privileges from the Armenian Government, but that she should enjoy the freedom to act, according to the Gospel mandate which has been given her. This involves the freedom to organize herself at the local and national levels in order better to meet the spiritual needs of the Catholic faithful and to be able to extend compassion and help where required. The faithful too must be free to form communities of faith and service under the local Church leadership, while a just solution should be sought to the Armenian Catholic community's existence in relation to the law on religious freedom and according to international standards.

Mr. Ambassador, your presence here is one of the signals of the new era which is dawning for the Republic of Armenia. I am confident that, through your work in the diplomatic mission you are undertaking today, this new era will also include the deepening of the bonds of friendship and co-operation between your mission and the Holy See. I assure you that the various officers of the Roman Curia will be ready to assist you in the fulfillment of your duties in any way they can. Renewing my good wishes for the success of your mission, I invoke the blessings of almighty God upon you and upon the Government and people of Armenia.

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SOURCE: *L'Osservatore Romano* (Weekly Edition), 29 March 1995.

"It is not the Church's desire that she should enjoy special privileges from the Armenian Government, but that she should enjoy the freedom to act, according to the Gospel mandate which has been given her. This involves the freedom to organize herself at the local and national levels."

— POPE JOHN PAUL II

PAPAZIAN (con't. from page 9)

specific structure, Etchmiadzin—the center of the church—is in Armenia and in the final analysis, formal and important decisions and policies concerning the church are made in Etchmiadzin. Thus, all the dioceses and the clergy in the Diaspora are expected to adhere and implement these decisions. In this respect, the role of the church is very specific, because Armenia, as a state, cannot intervene in the internal affairs of the Diaspora. The Armenians of the Diaspora are citizens of their respective countries (here I am simplifying the issue to tell you what I think). As such, the church could have more influence than the Armenian state. It is true that we have our embassies (not everywhere), which are set up to execute our policies with the governments and authorities of the respective countries—not the Armenian communities. But the church has more freedom and access to the local community than the embassy. As to what needs to be done, it is difficult to say anything specific. One thing is clear, the church has many things to do. I also realize that by simply theorizing or clarifying the problems you do not necessarily solve them. It is essential to have the people, the personnel, who would seriously tackle the problems. I know from my own experience—what we lack in foreign diplomacy is not policy, but people.

I am hopeful that Etchmiadzin will gain its strength again, especially now that we will have a new Catholicos, and I say this not just as a member of the Armenian Church, but because our nation, our country needs her. ■

**This interview was conducted on March 29, in Athens. Translated from Armenian by H. Tchilingirian.*

AN ARMENIAN AS POPE?

A BRITISH DIPLOMATIC REPORT ON CARDINAL AGAGIANIAN, 1958

Introduction and annotation by
Ara Sanjian

Recently, the Armenian Catholic Church marked the 100th anniversary of the birth of arguably its most famous cleric, Cardinal Grigor Petros XV Agagianian (Aghajanian), only the second Armenian Catholic churchman ever to be elevated to the exalted office of Cardinal. The honorary office has no particular theological significance. Cardinals assist the Pope in the government of the universal Roman Catholic Church. The first Armenian Cardinal had been Patriarch (Catholicos) Anton Petros IX Hassounian in 1880. However, there are persistent rumors—which, because of Catholic traditions of absolute secrecy on matters relating to papal elections, cannot be confirmed officially—that Agagianian is unique in Armenian history for having had his name twice, in 1958 and in 1963, discussed seriously as a possible candidate in the papal elections. During the *séance académique* culminating the above-mentioned 100th anniversary, held in Kaslik (Lebanon) on February 25, 1996, speaker after speaker expressed open regret for him not having been given the opportunity to show his talents in that highest of offices in the Catholic Church. Direct mention was made by one speaker, Father Jean Tabet, the Superior-General of the Maronite Lebanese Order, to an article by the Italian journalist, Andrea Tornielli, published in the December 12, 1993 issue of the Italian Catholic magazine, *30 Giorni*, in which the author had claimed that Agagianian had received a large share of votes in the 1958 conclave and that Italian military intelligence had mounted a slur campaign against him prior to the 1963 conclave by circulating a report that his 70-year old sister, Elizabeta Papikova, had ties to the KGB and had made contact with the Soviet embassy during her visit to Rome in 1962 to meet her brother.

The future Cardinal Agagianian was indeed born in Akhaltsikhe (now inside the Republic of Georgia in the Transcaucasus) on September 18, 1895, when the town was still part of the Russian

czarist empire. His Armenian Catholic ancestors were natives of Erzerum who, fleeing Ottoman persecution, had sought refuge in the Transcaucasus in 1829. Agagianian lost his father at an early age, but the Apostolic Administrator of Armenian Catholics in the Caucasus, Mgr Sargis Ter Abrahamian, fascinated by the young orphan's unusual intelligence, took him under his patronage and, in compliance with his mother's wish that one of her children become a clergyman, he appealed to Rome and succeeded in securing a place for the lad in the seminary of Propagation of Faith.

The young Agagianian set out for Rome in October 1906 and studied there for twelve years. He was graduated at the age of 22 specializing in theology, canon law and philosophy. Because of his superior intellectual ability, he was ordained a priest while still a student.

In 1919 he returned to the Caucasus as Curate of the Armenian Catholic St. Illuminator Church of Tbilisi. He was scarcely installed in his office when, because of his unusual administrative talent, he was appointed Pastor of Tbilisi Catholics.

At the age of twenty-six, Agagianian accepted an invitation to assume the chair of Cosmology and the Seven Holy Sacraments at Urban College, his *alma mater*, as well as the directorship of the Armenian Catholic Levonian Theological Seminary in Rome. Soon, the establishment in 1921 of a Soviet regime in Georgia would make his return to his native land impossible. For sixteen years, Agagianian lectured in philosophy and theology. It was during this period that he also published three works: *The Life of Father Komitas Keomourjian* (in Italian); *The Seven Holy Sacraments* and *The Holy Eucharist* (both in Latin). The latter two were later used as textbooks for students. During the last year of his professorship, Agagianian also served as advisory member of the Congregation for Eastern Rites and the Committee for Codification of the Canon Law of Eastern Churches.

Agagianian was ordained bishop in 1935 and sent to Lebanon as Apostolic Vicar to the Armenian Catholic Convent of Bzommar. He was elected "Patriarch of the Catholic Armenians and Catholicos of Cilicia" in 1937, at the age of 42, and was elevated to the exalted rank of Cardinal by Pope Pius XII in 1946. He was recalled to Rome in 1960 and served during the next decades as Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of Faith. He, therefore, had to resign as Catholicos-Patriarch of Armenian Catholics in 1962. Agagianian passed away in Rome on May 16, 1971.

The following British diplomatic document, dated January 26, 1958, which—as far as this publisher is aware of—is being published for the first time, indicates that, with the aging Pope Pius XIII increasingly suffering from poor health, the possibility of Agagianian succeeding him was also taken seriously by Sir Marcus Cheke, who served as British Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at the Holy See from May 30, 1957 till his death in 1960. In this diplomatic report addressed to Edward Michael Rose, the Head of the Levant Department at the British Foreign Office in 1955-1958, Cheke describes

a meeting he had with the Cardinal. Agagianian seemingly failed to impress the British Envoy fully, however, for although Cheke reported that Agagianian "certainly possesses some qualifications for such an elevation," he also underlined that he could not say that "he discerned in him the aura of a future Pontiff". Moreover, it is interesting that Mrs. Barbara Miller of the British Foreign Office Northern Department, commenting on the said report, thought that whatever the Cardinal's personal qualities might be, it was unlikely that he would be acceptable as Pontiff to the whole of the Sacred College of Cardinals, the senate of the Roman Catholic Church. The Uniate movement—which includes the Armenian Catholic Church—believed Miller, was not by any means popular in the Roman Catholic circles.

This document is also useful in shedding light on some of the Cardinal's views in regard to international affairs during the tense Cold War years. It is preserved at the Public Record Office in Kew, South-West London, in the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office General Correspondence (FO37) file no. 133892 under the document reference number V1782/4.

Confidential
1015/1/58

British Legation to the Holy See
Rome

January 26, 1958

Dear Michael,

I paid a call yesterday on the Cardinal Agagianian (sic), Patriarch of Cilicia of the Armenians, who customarily resides in Beirut. He is the head of the Armenian Uniate Church, and he is frequently mentioned as a possible successor to the present Pope by people who fancy that he may be destined to bring about a reconciliation between the Catholic Church and the U.S.S.R. He was actually born on Russian soil. Other recall a prophecy made by Pius the Tenth, who seeing Agagianian when was a student at the College of Propagation of Faith, put his hand on the young man's shoulder and murmured that he was destined for high dignity, "perhaps the highest".¹ I cannot say that I discerned in him the aura of a future Pontiff, but he certainly possesses some qualifications for such an elevation; he is clear-headed, his mind seems in perfect repose, and he speaks faultless English.

2. I had hoped that the Cardinal would give me concrete information about the situation in the Middle East where he is a front-seat observer, but though he kept me for half an hour I have only the following to pass on you:—

3. The Cardinal said he received no news whatever of the members of his Church,² who number 70,000, behind the Russian frontiers.

4. As regards the world situation, he describes himself as an optimist: as long as the West remained firmly united better times would come.

5. He said he thought the Syrian Government would like to renew diplomatic relations with Great Britain but national pride prevented them taking the first step.³

6. The Cardinal remarked that one of the most unfortunate things in the history of our times was that Russia's anti-colonial propaganda should coincide with anti-colonial sentiment in America. He considered that the

solution to the problems created by nationalist feeling among colonial peoples was to give them their independence, but not too fast. He spoke of Indonesia being a "mess".⁴ He then paid tribute to the stability and peace which the British Empire gave large areas of the world. As regards Russian intrigue in Middle Eastern countries he said it had two distinct facets: the one was the endeavour to seduce the sympathies of governments, and the other was to organize a party of violence among the mob. In this matter the Russians have copied the pre-war policy of the Nazis towards Danzig or Austria.

7. On the whole, I got the impression that the Cardinal, like certain members of the Vatican Secretariat of State, believes that the best thing for the Western powers to do is to hang on, avoid war (and the more strong armed and united they are, the less danger there is of Russia venturing on a war) and to wait for a transformation inside Russia, which he thinks will happen sooner or later.

8. I lately read Mademoiselle Sagan's⁵ latest novel in which I found the phrase: "Elle savait déjà qu'il ne saurait pas de trouver une réponse, mais d'attendre que la question ne se posât plus".⁶ In their policy of hanging on and waiting for a problem to evaporate with time, it occurred to me that these words might serve as a motto for many Roman ecclesiastics I have spoken with. They remember the stupendous blows which the Papacy suffered at the hands of the armies of the French Revolution, and later the hostility of the risorgimento which was really a sequel to the same Revolution;⁷ they see the Papacy enjoying today much of its ancient prestige, and they deduce that the Communist menace may one day blow over likewise.

Yours ever
Marcus Cheke

M. Rose Esquire, C.M.G.
Levant Department, Foreign Office
London S.W.1

Minutes

An interesting account. On paragraph 8 another encouraging quotation is "Quie mange du Pape en meurt".⁸

As to the Cardinal himself, whatever his personal qualities may be it does not seem likely the he would be acceptable as Pontiff to the whole of the Sacred College. The Uniate movement is not by any means popular in the Roman Catholic circles.

B. Miller
6/2

1. The "prophecy" referred to by Cheke was reportedly made in 1908, when Pope Pius X was visiting young Catholic Armenian students studying for priesthood in the Levonian seminary in Rome during celebrations commemorating the 25th anniversary of the foundation of that institution. According to another version of this "prophecy" retold by Father Antranik Granian, the young Agagianian joyously laughed when the Pope asked jokingly: "Let us see who among you will become a bishop?" Seeing the young lad's laughter, the Pontiff reportedly continued: "Do you smile? Do you like to become a bishop? I wish you become not only a bishop, but a Patriarch as well!" There is no mention of any prophecy regarding papacy in this version; see the trilingual (Armenian, Arabic, French) booklet, *Grigor Petros XV Agagianian: Catholicos-Patriarch of Catholic Armenians and Cardinal of the Universal Church (1895-1971)*, published on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Cardinal's birth.

2. i.e., the Armenian Catholic Church.

3. Syria and Egypt had broken off diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom in early November 1956 as a protest against the tripartite British-French-Israeli aggression against Egypt. Relations had not been restored when, just a few days after this report was filed, Syria and Egypt merged to form the United Arab Republic (UAR). Britain and the UAR restored diplomatic rela-

tions only on December 1, 1959.

4. Indonesia's independence had been recognized by the Netherlands, her former colonial master, in 1949. By the second half of the 1950s, however, the country was suffering from political in-fighting among different factions in its elite, leading in late 1956 and early 1957 to several abortive military coups and seizures of power in various provinces by military commanders opposed to the policies of the central government.

5. Françoise Sagan is the pen name of the French author, Françoise Quoiréz (b. 1935).

6. "She already knew that she would be unable to find an answer, but was waiting so that the question would no longer be asked".

7. The *Risorgimento* ("rebirth" or "renewal" in Italian) is the name of the movement from 1815 to 1861 that marked the last phase in the evolution of Italy toward a modern and unified nation-state based on the principles of constitutionalism, secularization, and economic development. The *Risorgimento* was heavily influenced, *inter alia*, from the ideas of the 18th century European Enlightenment and the principles of the French Revolution.

8. "He who eats the Pope dies".

FROM PHILOLOGY TO DIPLOMACY

Church and State Relations in Armenia and the Election of Two New Catholicos

A conversation with
Yervant Melkonian

Republic of Armenia's Chargé d'Affairs in Lebanon

by Hratch Tchilingirian

THE HON. YERVANT MELKONIAN was born in Kamishli, Syria. He received his primary education at the Yeprad Armenian National School in Kamishli, where a sizable Armenian community existed with its churches, schools and clubs. In 1958, at the age of 14, Melkonian went to Antelias, Lebanon, to study at the Seminary of the Catholicosate of Cilicia. Upon completion of his studies, he was ordained a deacon of the Armenian Church. He said, "I am still a deacon of the Armenian Church—most of my classmates are bishops and archbishops now. I must say that the church and religious education had a lasting impact on my life. In fact, I never left the church; my professional career was spent in Holy Etchmiadzin". In 1965, Melkonian's family "repatriated" to Armenia, and he left Antelias to join his family on their way to Armenia. In 1970, after graduating from the Philology Department of Yerevan State University—receiving a degree in Armenian Language and Literature—Melkonian became a lecturer in the Seminary of Holy Etchmiadzin, teaching Church History and Classical Armenian. From 1985 to 1992, he was also the chief-editor of Etchmiadzin Monthly, the official organ of the Catholicosate of All Armenians. Having served the Catholicosate for 22 years, Melkonian left his position in Etchmiadzin to become Armenia's Chargé d'Affairs in Lebanon.

9. How was your transition from philology to diplomacy?

MELKONIAN: In late 1993, the President of the Republic of Armenia called me and told me about the plan of the Republic of Armenia to open an embassy in Lebanon. Considering my familiarity with the Diaspora and the fact that a large community of Armenians live in Lebanon, he asked me if I would become Armenia's diplomatic representative to Lebanon. While I felt honored and privileged

for the President's confidence in me, I was little concerned about the assignment, since I did not have any diplomatic experience or any idea about diplomatic missions. The only thing I had was an interest in politics, especially issues related to the Armenians. I had never thought that one day I would become a diplomatic representative. Since the President of our Republic invited me to take this assignment, I responded positively to his call. Of course, the government, the people and history will ultimately decide how I carry out my responsibilities. I have a clear objective: to serve my country and nation.

Today our generation is making history. Not every generation has this opportunity. We witnessed and lived through historic events in the life of our nation—the collapse of the Soviet empire, the independence of Armenia, and new intergovernmental and diplomatic relations with other countries. And suddenly, one day, you receive the honor to become the first representative of your country to another country. I tell you, to have a sense of statehood is something else. Statehood is as important as independence. If you have the pride of being a state, the development of relations become easier. In this sense, when we were attempting to develop diplomatic missions, there were concerns as to how we were going to do it—we have never been to diplomatic schools. Diplomacy has strict rules and protocols and we were not sure how we would fit in. But now that we have a year-and-a-half experience in this kind of work, I am convinced that in order to be a diplomat, first of all, you need to be loyal to the country, people and government whose interests you are going to represent. If you believe in the present and the future of your people, then the most difficult issue of diplomacy is solved, that is, you believe in your work, you figure out what is good or harmful for your people. When this is clearly identified and carried

out on state level, the rest is left to your personal capabilities: intellect, character, and interaction. These are very important in diplomacy. Most of our work is carried out in informal settings—during gatherings, unofficial meetings, etc. It is in such settings that sincere exchange of thoughts and ideas are facilitated. And sometimes, some of the most complicated problems are unexpectedly resolved in these encounters. In formal and official encounters, both the host and the guest are constrained and speak with each other with careful language. They are careful not to say more than they need to say. In diplomacy you have no right to err. This is a very important rule. Because your error might result in serious consequences for you and your people.

Having said this, I could say that today, one year and a half since we opened our embassy here, Armenian-Lebanese relations are very good. In fact, recently, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia was here and signed several bilateral agreements with the government of Lebanon.

Q. Is the Armenian Embassy in Lebanon different from other embassies?

MELKONIAN: In a way it is because this embassy is located in a country where there is a large Armenian community. Of course this has its advantages and disadvantages. One of the advantages is that you feel yourself among your people and there is no psychological alienation. You feel that what you are doing for Armenia, you are doing also for the community here. After all, any Diaspora—any nation's Diaspora—cannot exist without a fatherland. What we are doing for the sake of Armenia—in terms of strengthening our country and statehood—in a way, we are doing also for the benefit of the Diaspora. Ultimately, whether we like it or not, sooner or later, the attention of all Armenians will turn to the fatherland. The fatherland is the focal point of all of our future intentions. If we do not have a national focal point, then we cannot solve any of our political or national problems. Today, Armenia, as an independent state, is in a position to realize all of our national hopes—of course, to accom-

plish this, time and determination are needed.

Q. In this context, how do you characterize the relationship between the Armenian state and the Diaspora?

MELKONIAN: Today, there is a clear understanding and a sense of responsibility, that our state should be the guardian of all our national values, without exceptions: religious values, cultural values, moral values. It is impossible for any individual group or sector, or organization to protect all our national values. Each Armenian group caters to a segment of the people—they have their particular followers and sympathizers. Unfortunately, while knowing that they represent only a segment of the people, they attempt to claim the rights of the entire nation. If we could solve this problem, we would have a better understanding of our internal communal affairs. It is only the state that can speak on behalf of the entire nation. The other organizations could speak only on behalf of their followers. As such, groups or organizations should join forces for the benefit of the whole. The rule of differences is very harmful, but the rule of how-are-we-similar is a functional one. Our Embassy's work, in relation to the Armenian community, is characterized by this rule. In all of our functions, we never discriminate against any national group or organization. Absolutely not. We invite all Armenian organizations to our functions and we keep them abreast of developments in our Embassy—whether it is Dashnagtsutyune, Hunchag, Ramgavar, Baregordzakan, Communist or others. For example, last year, May 28 [establishment of the First Republic of Armenia] was celebrated by all the parties—it was a true pan-Armenian event. Even the Armenian Communists, who for seventy years rejected that date, participated in the celebrations. May 28 is an event which has a national significance and the government of the Republic of Armenia, appreciating its importance, is the guardian of its value.

There might be incidents when we are denied participation in this or that national event. For example, today there are tendencies to

present the Armenian Cause [Genocide] as an "either-or" case. But that is very simplistic. I believe—and assure you—that as the government of Armenia becomes stronger, day by day, economically and in international relations, there will be no national problem which is not solvable. Methods, ways and times change, sometimes slowly, sometimes speedily. Nevertheless, the sooner the Diaspora understands this the better. Today, the leadership of the Republic of Armenia has a clear sense of responsibility toward these issues. Fortunately, their sense of responsibility could not be measured by the standards of any particular sector—even historical ones with their one hundred-year-old perceptions. The view of the current state leadership in Armenia is much deeper than that.

Sometimes people say, coming from the "deaf caves" of the Madenataran [the Manuscript Library], how could President [Ter Petrossian] run a country. I wish everybody had the good fortune to look [at events] from those "caves of our history". It is there that the depth of our history is measured, and in turn, our responsibility is measured according to that depth. I as a philologist—as I said, I am not a career diplomat—am aware of that deep history. Nobody has the right to doubt the sincerity of my feelings. One may not agree with me, but I am entitled to have my personal opinions, just as I am expected to respect the opinions of others. It is not the difference of opinions or views that create a state, but states are built on agreements, on harmony, on bringing ideas together. Finally, when there is a state, the state cannot be the subject under question per se. We may disagree on this or that issue, but we should never forget that today, this is the state we have. Tomorrow, if the leadership is changed, nothing changes from the state—the state as an Armenian national entity does not change. We should not measure our judgments based on individuals. The person of the President of Armenia may not be acceptable to certain people—there are those who have expressed their opinions in this regard—but as of yet, nobody has enumerated justifiable reasons as to why this President is unacceptable, except for emotional ones. You cannot run a state based on emotions. You

may love or hate someone, but to turn emotions into a political principle is the most dangerous game.

Q. You are the only Armenian diplomat familiar with Armenian Church affairs, having served in Holy Etchmiadzin for more than two decades. What are your thoughts on the mission of the Armenian Church today?

MELKONIAN: During my twenty-two year tenure in Etchmiadzin, I have witnessed the church's role during the Soviet era and after. We know that the Soviet Union was an atheistic country and religion was rejected in principle. The ways that this was done are well known. For me, as someone who knows the church quite well, one thing is very important: during the seventy years of the Soviet regime, the church functioned with one principle: the people came to the church, the church never went to the people. Today, if there is one thing that needs to change in Armenia it is this *modus operandi*. The church herself should go to the people. The church should enter into the life of the people, starting from the hospitals, prisons and everywhere. In short, Armenians should experience the church in their daily lives. Thus, it is very important to revitalize the church with a new momentum. It was for this reason, I believe, that the President, who is someone very familiar with the internal life of the church, put forward the idea that the one who occupies the throne of the Catholicos of All Armenians should be the most qualified person—Catholicos Karekin. This was done so that he may reorganize the church internally and bring a new spiritual strength to the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin; so that the clergy may realize that their primary calling is in the church and that they should be less secular; so that there is a spiritual structure that would sustain the collective morality of the nation.

Today, under the conditions of independent Armenia, the principle task of the church should be the moral welfare of the nation. The issue of the moral education of the nation should be carried out based on church and religious norms, because the Church is the embodiment of our national traditions. The church, in the absence of national statehood,

assumed state functions. Thus, by state and religious virtues, the Armenian Church became a purified national ethos. We need to return this to the church. She should become a strong spiritual structure with a wide-ranging missionary dimension. In order to accomplish these tasks, the church needs clergy who are not only aware of their calling, but are also intellectually prepared to deal with contemporary problems in the world. The church needs clergy who would carry out the religious and moral education of the people. If need be, the church should institute certain reforms. Today, educating people based on the thinking and the canons that were drawn up a thousand years ago would be almost impossible. The church should keep pace with the times. She needs to be renewed even by preserving the traditions. Just as our church architecture has changed over the centuries and adapted to the needs of the times, the church should adapt to the times and fit the times into her larger mission.

I hope that the election of Catholicos Karekin of All Armenians will be very fruitful within the next two or three years. We hope that the Holy See of Etchmiadzin will be stronger and the spiritual atmosphere in Armenia will improve—and most important, the image of the clergy would be raised, once again, in the eyes of Armenians. Indeed throughout the entire Soviet period, especially in the 1950s and 60s, the clergy were treated very badly and unfairly on all levels. Today, one thing is clear: the clergy is not persecuted and will not be persecuted, on the other hand, he should be accountable for carrying out the oath he gave to God and should perform his duties conscientiously, with total dedication and service.

If this happens, I do not see any contradiction in principle, between the activities of the church and the state. It is true that constitutionally they are separate, but they cannot exist exclusive of each other. The cause is one: the spiritual, moral education of the nation; the strengthening of our national statehood and independence—in short, the self-affirmation of the nation in the international family of nations. In this sense, church and state complement each other.

Q. Can you elaborate as to why

President Ter Petrossian endorsed the candidacy of Catholicos Karekin prior to the pontifical election in Etchmiadzin?

MELKONIAN: When the President of Armenia publicly expressed his opinion concerning the pontifical election, it was interpreted as state intervention in the affairs of the church. I regret for those people who viewed it as mediation rather than a very responsible position before a crucial historic moment. As someone who knows the President and one who has discussed these issues with him, I know—and have no doubt—that the President acted in response to the seriousness of the moment. On the contrary, people and organizations should be happy, should be proud, that they have a President who—at this important historical moment—did not relegate his responsibility toward his nation's history. If you remember, in his first address to the Catholicos, he said, "the President and the Catholicos ought to sacrifice [*madagh*] their lives for the people". This is why the President raised his voice publicly concerning this issue. Because he would not tolerate any accidental or haphazard turn of events in the Mother See of Etchmiadzin. Of course, this does not mean that the other candidates for the election were not worthy—but it was a matter of the worthiest. Our views were based on qualifications, and we were well aware that Catholicos Karekin was the most qualified, on an international scale. This was needed to be said loudly. We had nothing to be ashamed of. This was our understanding. I hope that this understanding will be appreciated in the Diaspora as well. We were well aware that we were breaking a 600-year-old norm by considering the Catholicos of Cilicia worthy to become the Catholicos of All Armenians. My interpretation of this is as follows: the Mother See of Etchmiadzin, vis a vis the Republic of Armenia, took the first step toward the issue of church unity and its consequences for history. The state does not see the existence of the fatherland only based on the developments of today, but it looks at its existence for history. The state's perspective is both looking back deep into history, and looking forward to future goals and destinations. That

is why the state has the right to hope—and it seems that it will spare no effort—to make the dream of church unity come true.

I would have been very surprised if the government of Armenia were to remain indifferent as to who will be the next Catholicos. We have enormous national treasures in Etchmiadzin. Shouldn't we have thought about who is going to be responsible for these treasures? One thing is clear: if our national interests require the cooperation of the church and state, so that the morale of our people is quickly improved and revitalized, then we will do it by all means, regardless of the principles adopted by others.

Q. How about the division in the Armenian Church?

MELKONIAN: In the past, various historical necessities have given rise to the existence of this or that church structure. There were historical circumstances whereby various tendencies in church relations emerged—in this case, the Etchmiadzin-Antelias division which is interpreted as the result of historical necessity. At least this is how it is presented by Antelias—they say that Armenia was not free, that Armenia was under Soviet rule, and the Catholicos was subject to the will of the Soviet government, the Mother See was weak and could not tend to the spiritual needs of the nation, etc. Well, today, Armenia is free and the Church is not subject to outside forces. In free Armenia, the Church will be stronger and will prepare herself to offer her spiritual service to all sectors of the people. Logically speaking, one would ask: Why can't the Cilician See, in its entirety and through its brotherhood, offer her religious, spiritual service to the Armenian nation under the auspices of the universal Catholicosate of All Armenians? Why not? What's preventing us?

Q. How about the Patriarchates of Jerusalem and Constantinople?

MELKONIAN: The circumstances for the existence of the two Patriarchates are different. The historical circumstances that determined their existence are still in place. For example, in order to preserve the sixty-thousand strong Armenian community in Turkey, we do not have any other structure except the Patriarchate of Constantinople. In order to preserve and defend our national treasures in Jerusalem, we do not have any other structure except the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. If the existence of the Cilician See is justified by ministering to the religious needs of the nation—the "people of Cilicia"—I do not see any contradiction or problem in providing that service under the auspices of the universal Catholicosate of All Armenians—just as the other

in carrying out their service to the nation—unless there are doctrinal or canonical differences. If there are political reasons, then gradually, those reasons should diminish, and perhaps one day they will be completely lifted. The unity of the church should be restored.

Q. However, now that the Cilician See has a new Catholicos, how would your proposal be implemented?

MELKONIAN: We knew that the Cilician See, after the election of Catholicos Karekin, would have a new Catholicos in Antelias. This was obvious. For Antelias, as far as church unity is concerned, the point of departure is cooperation. Let the cooperations start and then the cooperation would itself determine the future course and realities. Then, in time, it would be asked as to what is the meaning of cooperation.

Q. Going back to church-state relations, it seems that the government of Armenia has assigned the church the responsibility to tend to the moral and spiritual needs of the Armenian nation. What are your thoughts on this issue?

MELKONIAN: This is true, especially in view of the fact that the government of Armenia—because of the serious economic problems—is not in a position to carry the entire responsibility of education, schooling, moral upbringing and development of

cultural expressions of the people. At this point, it is impossible financially to carry out these tasks. It is natural that under such conditions the government would want to have certain institutions on its side which would bear some of these responsibilities. For example, cultural organizations would be concerned with the cultural development of the people. In the case of the spiritual, moral education of the people, the government, naturally, would rely on the Armenian Apostolic Church—not any church,

(continued on page 24)

...if our government has faith in the missionary role of the Armenian Apostolic Church and her historical values, is this a sin or a blessing?

two Patriarchates are serving the nation under the auspices of Etchmiadzin. Being a Patriarchate does not negate the mission of a given church structure. For example, members of both the brotherhood of Jerusalem and Constantinople are serving in places where they are needed and where they are called to fill a need. Why should a service be determined based on the principle of rendering it to a particular structure? We have to bear in mind that the Catholicosate of All Armenians does not impede the other structures

WOMEN AND THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

H.H. Karekin I, Catholicos of All Armenians,
on the occasion of the
UN Fourth International Conference on Women in Beijing

I HEARTILY WELCOME ALL SISTERS IN GOD WHO ARE assembled in Beijing for the Fourth World Conference on Women. I pray God that their deliberations may promote the women's growing participation in human life in today's world. Hereunder I share with you some of my thoughts in the light of your interest.

1. Women are part and parcel, integral component of humankind; their involvement in their respective societies is of paramount significance for the betterment of the quality of human life taken in a holistic approach. Whatever God has granted to womanly human nature should be fully shared with all human beings without any kind of discrimination. Their grace is God's gift, and human beings and considerations of societal and sociological character should not prevent women from offering the fruits of that grace to all humankind.

2. Women have always been present and often very active in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the life of His church. The Armenian Church Tradition is eloquent in providing ample evidence for the women's impact-making role in the life of the Armenian people all along the past twenty centuries. The first Armenian person who ever gave her life for the sake of Christ was a woman, St. Santoukht, in the first century. Women in Armenian life have been preachers, educators, members of Religious Orders, benefactors, most active servants in social services, mothers par excellence, even martyrs in defense of and for the lively preservation of the Christian faith.

3. The Armenian Church does not allow the priestly ordination for women. This attitude should never be considered as an attitude of discrimination. The Church follows the Tradition (with a capital T) and has to respect that Tradition. The question of ordination of women has never emanated from the life of the Armenian Church. It has been considered as a foreign question that has not affected the life of the Church. Women in the Armenian Church are fully satisfied with their active engagement in all aspects and areas of service of the Church.

4. Divorce and remarriage are allowed in the Armenian Church but only on grounds of the teachings of the Gospel. Divorce is possible but most difficult to acquire, because the Church does

preach the sanctity of marriage and does everything possible to promote normal life, particularly in modern societies, and which have to be handled in the spirit of mutual sacrifices.

5. The sanctity of human life is recognized above all considerations. Life is the gift of God and should be respected on all levels and in all cases. The refusal of abortion emanates from such basic principle as taught in the Bible and in the Tradition of the Church. However, the Armenian Church has not formulated any dogmatic stand on this matter. It tries to build up and cultivate this principle in the hearts and minds of its people recognizing their freedom to exercise such principle according to their Christian conscience and moral responsibility.

6. In Armenia of today I rejoice by seeing the role of women in constant growth. As the head of the Church I think I was first Catholicos of All Armenians in whose election women took part.

7. Surely, the Church is not a political institution. Political engagements is not its immediate and primary concern. Political issues and actions are left to the State and to political parties. The Church only comes in and speaks and acts on such issues which are described as political but have a bearing on moral, spiritual values, particularly when these latter are not given full consideration or are being violated. This is why the Armenian Church manifests its concern for the genocide perpetrated against the Armenian nation by the Turks in 1915 to 1920s. For human life has been destroyed and the consequences of the genocide continue to affect the Armenian life all around the world. The same concern the Church expresses for any other nation, people or group.

8. I sincerely believe that the United Nations is rendering a greatly beneficial service to human life of today and for the decades to follow, by enhancing the concern and the care of humankind for the advancement of women's role in human life. Ancient injustices should be redressed and women should feel that they are equal to men in the eyes of God, the Creator of the world and the Giver of life.

KAREKIN I
Catholicos of All Armenians

Etchmiadzin, August 1995

AN ARMENIAN VOICE IN THE MORAL WILDERNESS

Bebo Simonian on Social and Moral Issue

In contemporary Armenian community life, to read or hear about serious discussion on moral and social issues is a rare occasion—especially, issues that are outside the realm of Armenian national or ecclesiastical concerns. But Bebo Simonian, a voice in the wilderness, is an exception. A Lebanese-Armenian educator, essayist, and poet, Simonian is the author of *Human Rights Issues* (Մարդկային Իրաւանց Հարցեր) which was recently published in Beirut, Lebanon (in Armenian).

Human Rights Issues, a collection of essays, raises awareness of issues that concern our world and society today. The focus of Simonian's discourse is the society in general, and the individual in particular. Organized under 29 headings, Simonian discusses the problem of illiteracy in our age of enlightenment; the impact of nuclear proliferation on society and ecology; human rights violations around the world; the Armenian Genocide and the conflict in Karabakh as human rights issues; and other selected topics. In the final essay of the book, Simonian presents the thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi and his vision for social cohesion, according to which there cannot be politics without principles; science with-

out humanity; pleasure without consciousness; business without morality. Based on Gandhi's model, Simonian articulates a sobering thesis for restoration of basic human values in society, whereby the individual is transformed from self-centered materialism to a shared vision of moral and spiritual accountability. As Simonian explains the purpose of the book, "my intention is to communicate these issues and problems to my own community. Therefore, I write in Armenian for Armenians".

Bebo Simonian's literary career expands over three decades. As a prolific writer and intellectual of the Lebanese-Armenian community, he has authored over dozen books and numerous articles on Armenian literature, culture, history and political life. From 1975-1995 he was the Dean of Sahagian L. Megerdichian College in Beirut.

During a conversation with *Window*, Simonian expressed some of his concerns—

Changes in Society

Our world has changed drastically during the last two decades, especially here in Lebanon—the civil war (for 17 years) has irreparably destroyed the moral fiber of our society. Society—the commu-

nity of spiritual and moral beings—is in a despondent process. Our society is gradually losing its fundamental moral principles. As for us Armenians, we are also affected by these changes. Societal problems do not distinguish between nationalities—there is no difference between Armenian and 'non-Armenian' problems. An Armenian is a human being first, therefore, he is also affected by these changes.

Church and State

Separation of church and state does not mean the demise of religion's role in society. On the contrary, it allows religion to play its role in public moral life. The state, as an institution, has a different structure than the church. Religion or the church, should never aspire for political or state authority. The church's raison d'être is to educate the faithful and tend to the spiritual and moral needs of the people. As far as society as a whole is concerned, the church's role is to ensure that democratic principles are adhered to—so that the state and society do not go astray and fall into violations of human rights. The church has moral authority in society. If there is breach of democratic principles in a country, the church should stand and defend

the rights of society. Outside this realm, the church should not get involved in politics. Politics is 'dirty' and when the church gets involved in politics, it gets 'dirty' as well. For example, here in Lebanon, when the Christians mixed religion and politics together, they discharged Christianity's moral and religious ethos and turned it into an ideology of violence. The same trend could also be seen in Islamic fundamentalism, which is spreading rapidly around the Middle East.

On Christianity

Even though Christianity speaks about a 'life after', I believe Christianity is also for life here, in this world. Accordingly, Christianity should be made alive—real in everyday life.

Sources of Moral Values

The three most important institutions in a society are the family, the school and the community.

First, the family—the nucleus of society—transmits spiritual and moral values to the children. It is in the family where children become acquainted with their value systems and develop an understanding—as well as an appreciation—of values.

Second, the school environment and the teachers, as role models, are crucial in the developmental stages of a person's life. If the teachers themselves do not have moral standing in life, then they cannot transmit the same to their students. Unfortunately, today many of our schools operate with teachers who hardly provide a role model to the students. Many teachers take their work as a "job" for income, rather than a career or a 'vocation'. For most teachers, the school is a 'business'—they come, teach their classes, and go home. There are very few teach-

ers who take their role very seriously and feel a responsibility toward the education of their students. For example, I tell my teaching staff that everyday—for at least ten minutes in the morning—they need to discuss with the students issues related to human relationships, communication, interaction, values and lifestyles. Besides these daily discussions, we also have weekly gatherings with the entire student body, where I make presentations and give short talks on, for example, how character and moral values are more important than having a diploma or a degree.

Third is the community. Today, the community is in a tangle, particularly here in Lebanon where we lived through a long civil war. As in any war, the moral fiber of society is deminished. The buildings that were destroyed by the war are repairable, but the rebuilding of the moral and spiritual soul of the Lebanese society is going to be very difficult—perhaps impossible. Before the war, there was sincerity in our human interactions, honesty, respect, values that enriched our lives. But today, we have a completely different scene. We need moral panacea to heal the social and spiritual wounds of our society.

While Simonian's presentations and prescription pertain to the social and moral issues in the Middle East, the "Armenian voice" of his thoughts and critique make him one of the very few leaders in the Armenian diaspora who have the sensitivity and the courage to raise their prophetic voice. Simonian believes that a consistent discourse on societal problems would enhance a complementary understanding between the individual and the community. As he affirms, "When we identify, address and disentangle our problems, we create a better chance of finding remedies." HT

Societal problems do not distinguish between nationalities, there is no difference between Armenian and 'non-Armenian' problems. An Armenian is a human being first, therefore, he is also affected by these changes.

—Bebo Simonian

BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES OF ETHNIC PAROCHIALISM

***Azadouhi Kalaidjian Simonian discusses issues
related to Youth and Education***

The post-Cold War era has been a mixed blessing for the *new world order*. On the one hand, there is increasing interest in social, ecological, gender and moral issues facing the world, on the other hand, nationalism and politicized religion have dominated the central stage of public discourse.

The current wave of globalization and "universalism" of emerging modern culture needs to be examined in the context of micro-social concerns of a given community, in a given society. As the value systems and identity references of society are rapidly modified and changed, the *old* and the *traditional* are easily discarded as archaic conventions of yesterworld. Addressing the problems facing a community—especially during such complex social transitions—is a challenge to politicians, educators, scholars, and those who are concerned with the welfare of society.

Azadouhi Simonian—member of the faculty of the Lebanese American University—in *Youth and Education* (in Armenian, published by the Catholicosate of Cilicia, Antelias, 1995), addresses the "modern problems" of the Lebanese Armenian community. She presents a diagnosis of the issues concerning the youth, in particular, and

the Armenian family in general, and suggests practical remedies based on her experience as an educator, columnist, activist, wife and mother. The thrust of *Youth and Education* evolves around youth-family, woman-culture axis. In discussing the overall education of the youth—academic, moral, religious, cultural—Simonian concentrates on the role of the Armenian woman in the education of the youth. She brings the Armenian woman *out of the kitchen* and assigns her a more active role in the social discourse of the community.

Comprised of ten essays, *Youth and Education* deals with a series of complimentary and overlapping topics, such as: The traditional and the new in modern society, religious-moral education in the family, rebellion in youth, parent-child relationship, the Armenian woman as educator, youth and the educational challenges of modern times, and others. Throughout the volume, the contextual framework of Simonian's propositions is based on Armenian religious-moral values.

In the introductory essay of *Youth and Education*, Simonian explains the need for a balance between the "traditional" and the "modern". She cautions the youth of the dangers of materialism,

consumerism and opportunism—traits that have come to characterize modern society. In explaining the traditional and the new, Simonian writes:

The traditional is [one's] culture. It is man's [woman's] creativity in the arts, literature, music, architecture and other related creative expressions. Through democracy, freedom of thought and expression, respect for human rights, education, family and religion, society sets the parameter of its function.

Civilization is the new, the modern. It is the technical, the scientific advancements and material achievements.

...The influence of the modern era is characterized by the stripping of the person from his/her traditionally upheld moral character and by emphasizing the material values [of modern life] (p. 9-10).

Without being anachronistic, Simonian weaves an appreciation of traditional values—i.e., proven wisdom of life and qualities that are important in the Armenian ethos—and blends them with the modern norms and demands of life.

While being sensitive to the particular socio-cultural idiosyncrasy of the Armenian community, she successfully widens

(continued on page 23)



Vigen Guroian, *Ethics After Christendom:* Toward an Ecclesial Christian Ethics.

William B. Eerdman's Publishing Company, 1995

Reviewed by Martin Oren

Ethics After Christendom is worth reading for several reasons, the first of which is Prof. Guroian's penetrating analysis of contemporary American culture. The core of American values are no longer (if ever) communally Christian, but have become egocentric, privatistic, autonomous, and essentially secular. Ethics cannot rely on a moral common denominator in the culture. Indeed, public morality is increasingly constrictive of Christian behavior, to which silent strangulation mainstream Christianity has weakly acquiesced. Ethics, in the process, has lost its worship and liturgical context, not to mention its eschatological dimension.

Given such fundamental anarchy, Guroian refutes proposals from Martin Marty and others for a "public theology", based upon collaboration between religious communities. Creedal and structural divisions are giving way to a progressive/orthodox dichotomy which cuts sharply through all denominations. Such external activities as "public" theologizing do not address this deep lesion in the very heart of the Church.

The only hopeful road the Church can take is an internal one. Christian Tradition, the living embodiment of the practices of the Church community through time, stands in stark contrast to the traditionless autonomy of the present culture. Tradition is not a

static body of material received from the past, but nothing less than the ultimate pursuit of the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Christ, who is the *alpha* and *omega* of history, provides ethics with its eschatological goal.

The process of ecclesial ethics is dialogic, incorporating scriptural teaching, apostolic teaching, and liturgical practice. Through the internal discipline of the church community, an icon emerges for the civil commonwealth as well: "The church seeks not merely the salvation of individuals but the reclamation of the fallen social, political, and economic life of mankind."

On the proper context and use of the Bible in Orthodox ethics, the distinctive contribution of Orthodoxy is that it maintains the larger liturgical framework within which the Bible can function: "The liturgy is Scripture's home rather than it's stepchild." Ethics is communal, nurturing the existential unity of word and sacrament. The incarnation of the eucharist is extended to the world as the believing community becomes the social embodiment of evangelical truth. This is the true completion of the hermeneutical circle, and this communal obedience is the bedrock for all theological speculation.

Guroian devotes a chapter of the book to a discussion of the Armenian Church and the inher-

ent dangers of nationalism. The Church faces a unique kind of secular contamination in Armenia, where the hierarchy has gravitated towards a self-appointed monopoly over the religious life of the people. The danger of the larger mission of the Church being reduced to a nationalistic agenda is very real. The thoughts of D. Bonhoeffer and T. Nersoyan are weighed, and the Armenian Church is viewed as an institution subordinating her true missionary calling to the interests of ethnic preservation. The answer here is not to forsake or deny national concerns, but to return to the primary concerns of renewing ecclesial discipline and building community. In the process, the principle of free growth in the churches of Armenia must not be resisted. The elements of free gathering can profitably co-exist with national elements in the Church. Both share a common transcendent goal, but ethnic preservation can be more suitably addressed by political agencies. Indeed, a genuinely ecumenical Church, free of a narrowly ethnic agenda, would be of the greatest service to the nation.

The final portion of the book consists in the application of the liturgy to particular contemporary issues: family values, the ecology, and death and dying.

This book is not an ethical encyclopedia; it is an introduction to self-conscious Orthodox ethical method, which cries out for further development in various directions. The strength of the book lies in its bold and uncompromising ecclesiology. Christian ethics must grow out of the heart of the Church, which we find in her liturgical life. When there is discord in the orchestra pit, it is ludicrous to expect symphonia in the balcony. Especially in the West, the Church must stop preaching at the outside and start fixing the inside. St. Paul, in all his apostolic splendor, refused to judge the world.

Yet, he held the Church accountable to her calling, corporately and individually. The church today is a flurry of external activity, a vain attempt to mask her diseased spirit. Projects and activities can be manufactured, buildings can be bought; being cannot be counterfeited. Guroian provides suggestions as to how the Church could remain true to her mission within the context of her Holy Tradition. *Ethics after Christendom* is an important contribution to the study of Orthodox ethics and contemporary ecclesiological issues.

Guroian is also the author of two other books: *Incarinate Love: Essays in Orthodox Ethics* (University of Notre Dame, Indiana, 1987); and *Faith, Church, Mission: Essays for Renewal in the Armenian Church* (Prelacy of the Armenian Church, New York, 1995).

SIMONIAN (con't from page 21)

the perspective of her community beyond the boundaries of its ethnic parochialism. Instead of treating Armenian educational, cultural and religious values as sources of exclusion, or differentiation, she presents them as sources of moral strength and wisdom to make a person a *better* person. The achievements of individuals are not measured by their academic education per se, but by their contribution to society, and ultimately to humanity.

Azadouhi Simonian, for over two decades, has been an active member of the Armenian community and has greatly contributed to the cause of Armenian women. Whether in her previous book, *The Armenian Women, Family and Youth* (in Armenian, 1988), or in this volume, or through her numerous lectures and seminars, Simonian has been among the few Armenian women who have had the courage to voice their convictions, and in time, have become the conscience of their community. HT

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

ATTACKS ON MINORITY RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN ARMENIA

Amnesty International called on the authorities [of the Republic of Armenia] to initiate comprehensive investigation after minority religious groups were targeted in a wave of attacks in various parts of the country in April [1995]. Groups of unidentified men are said to have attacked meetings and premises, beaten sect members and destroyed property. The attackers reportedly accused religious leaders of preaching against the conscription of young men into military (Armenia has no civilian alternative to compulsory military service) and of discouraging their members from fighting in Karabakh. Some sect leaders were also said to have been detained briefly by police and border guards seeking to enforce conscription. Amnesty International is concerned about allegations that attackers acted with impunity in many cases, especially in the light of previous reports that police refused to respond to attacks against Hare Krishna devotees in August 1994 (see AI Index: EUR 01/01/95). The organization has yet to receive a response to the concerns it raised over this incident.

The violent attacks are reported to have begun on 18 April when around 20 men in military uniforms armed with iron rods entered the Hare Krishna temple in Yerevan, the capital, and began beating the devotees and destroying property. Devotees claim the police again refused to attend when called, although five of their members needed stitches for head wounds and the attackers stole electrical equipment and a large sum of cash. Other incidents reported included serious damage to a Seventh Day Adventist church in Ararat after a firebomb was thrown through the window on 22 April, and attacks at around the same time on the offices of the Bahai and Charismatic churches in Yerevan during which documents and equipment were stolen or destroyed. Leaders of Pentecostal, Evangelical Baptist and Jehovah's Witness congregations were also detained briefly by the authorities in connection with allegations of draft evasion.

Amnesty International urged the authorities to ensure all such incidents were investigated comprehensively—with perpetrators of the attacks brought to justice—and to take all necessary steps to ensure that religious groups are able to exercise their right to freedom of conscience in safety. The organization also expressed its concern over the continuing lack of a civilian alternative to compulsory military service. Conscientious objection to military service is recognized by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights as a legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of thought, religion and conscience, a right guaranteed under Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (to which Armenia acceded in 1993). In the light of this, the organization urged the authorities to ensure that no one is imprisoned solely for refusing to perform military service on grounds of conscience, and that no conscientious objectors are forcibly conscripted into the armed forces in the absence of an alternative civilian service.

SOURCE: Amnesty International/ "Concerns in Europe, January - June 1995". September 1995, AI Index: EUR 01/02/95, Distr: SC/CO/GR

MELKONIAN (*con't. fr page 17*) but the one which is historically dear and familiar to the people.

Those who saw a "government conspiracy" in the election of the new Catholicos to exert influence on the church are motivated by their own personal agenda—to criticize and condemn the government. These people are doomed to fail, because they will soon see that Catholicos Karekin is receiving only encouragement and support from the government authorities to carry out his projects and activities. As I mentioned earlier, both the President and the Catholicos work with the realization that their lives are to be sacrificed [*madagh*] for the people. That is, Catholicos Karekin will have the backing of the government for all his religious and church projects. I think any church would envy this situation. I would like to see any other church which enjoys such support from the government. This is not a matter of influence, but a matter of support. The government does not need to take the church in its hands and add another burden to its overwhelming responsibilities. On the contrary, the state gives the church the opportunities for independent development and whenever needed, provides the necessary help.

9. Other churches and religions, especially in the West, see this relationship between the Armenian state and the Apostolic Church as unfair or unacceptable. They see a contradiction in the principle of separation of church and state. How would you respond to these views?

MELKONIAN: We have to look at the issue in terms of what the purpose and meaning of existence of any given church is. We could say that it is to preach the Gospel among its people and bring them closer to God in their daily lives, i.e., to make the truths of the Gospel part of their daily lives. On the other hand, any government is concerned to have a healthy population and part of that health is the spiritual education of the people. Therefore, if our government has faith in the missionary role of the Armenian Apostolic Church and her historical values, is this a sin or a blessing? I

believe this is a benefit, an advantage. Hence, the purpose of the government is to facilitate the mission of the church for the moral welfare of the people. The government sees the church in her role as provider of spiritual-moral education. Each and every church in the West or elsewhere has the right to question this relationship. But they have to look at what it is they are doing among their people that we are not doing in Armenia. Our church-state relationship in Armenia is for the benefit of our people. Of course it is the church that will decide what is needed for the spiritual and moral welfare of the people and not the government. The government would only help the church in her mission. This is our understanding of this issue.

We have to realize that our Church is different from other churches. She is also a national symbol. Today, we cannot forget overnight the symbolic identification of the church. For centuries, our church has created our culture and the government cannot disregard this aspect of our history. For example, can you image a case where the government would consider a Gospel manuscript a purely religious object and would not be concerned about its preservation. It would seem irresponsible. If a manuscript needs preservation and the church does not have the means to do it, then the government will preserve it. This is what we mean by religious values—the cultural memory of the people. The state is the guardian of that cultural memory of the people and it cannot remain indifferent to it.

9. If I understand you correctly, church and state relations in Armenia are determined by concern over the spiritual and moral welfare of the Armenian nation and that this concern is part of the nation and state building process. Right?

MELKONIAN: Of course. I would add that the Church, in certain circumstances, could also help the state. For example, Armenia is today in a very difficult economic situation and the government is doing everything to improve it. The church can play a role in this situation by giving people

the spiritual strength to endure hardship and by instilling in them a spirit of patience and courage. I cannot imagine the existence of a person only in the reading of the Gospel. The Gospel should become alive in his life. No religion can be self-serving. The purpose of all religions is man himself. Therefore, when the government helps the church to make man a better man, I see this as a positive thing—as something we can be happy about. The other extreme is to have a government or structures which are not interested in these issues at all. We have seventy years experience of that. We were doing everything, closing churches, forbidding baptisms, even if someone had the word *Ter* [meaning priest] in their names, as in *Ter Petrossian*, we were telling them take out *Ter*—*Petros* is enough. Well, if this is separation of church and state, it is very wrong. We cannot allow this to happen.

Any state is responsible toward the history of a given nation. Take the case of Jerusalem for example: the Israeli government has made the status of Jerusalem a matter of international politics. Why? Because the religious sentiments and values connected with Jerusalem are very important for the Jewish people. Otherwise, why would the Israeli government be concerned about who is going to live in Jerusalem? The city has great importance in the Jewish religious ethos and the government wants to preserve it as such. It is the same for the Palestinians—they want to hold on to Jerusalem because it is a center of their national religious heritage. Thus, if this kind of concern is permissible for governments in other countries, why isn't it permissible for Armenia as well? There are other examples of this, such as Saudi Arabia, England, etc. The protection and preservation of national values, including religious values, is the responsibility of the state. ■

*This interview was conducted
in Beirut, Lebanon,
on April 21, 1995.
Translated from Armenian
by H. Tchilingirian.*

PONTIFICAL ELECTION IN ANTELIAS

Catholicos Aram I

Holy See of the Great House of Cilicia

On July 1, 1995, Archbishop Aram Keshishian, Primate of the Diocese of Lebanon and Moderator of the World Council of Churches, was consecrated Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, in Antelias, Lebanon. For the first time in the history of the Armenian Church, the Catholicos of All Armenians presided over the ordination and consecration of a new Catholicos of the Cilician See. The respective patriarchs of Constantinople and Jerusalem were also present. Just as in the case of the election of Catholicos Karekin I in Etchmiadzin, in April, the consecration ceremonies in Antelias were attended by ecumenical and government representatives from around the world.

Throughout the election and consecration process, church unity was a prevalent theme in all of Catholicos Aram I's public comments. "He stressed the need to promote the unity of the church, through collaboration with the Holy See of Etchmiadzin," affirmed Catholicos Karekin I, who has espoused the same ideal for nearly a decade.

Church Unity

Contrary to popular perception, church unity does not mean the merger of the two Sees (Etchmiadzin and Cilicia) into one See. In essence, church unity—in its historical context—means going back to pre-1956 status of relationship between the two Sees, i.e., the Cilician See will return to its "historical area of jurisdiction" which include Lebanon, Syria and Cyprus. In the 1950s, due to the internal and external problems in the Armenian Diaspora, the Cilician See established counter dioceses in the United States, Iran and Greece. Thus, the "division" in the church is on diocesan and jurisdictional levels. Until 1956, the two Sees had very good relations and complemented each others work by sharing their resources and personnel. As Khachik Babikian—Chairman of the World National Church Assembly of the Cilician See—stated, with the election of Catholicos Karekin, "there should be a very harmonious relationship between the Sees. That is the harvest that we will reap from these historic events."

In practical terms, church unity means the resolution of the diocesan divisions in North America, Iran and Greece—the first being the most controversial. High ranking officials both in Etchmiadzin and Antelias believe that, with the election of Karekin I as Catholicos

of All Armenians, the *modus operandi* of the Armenian Church will change and in time, the issue of diocesan divisions will be solved. As the new Catholicos, Aram I of the Cilician See stated, "Due to particular circumstances within the one and the same Armenian Church two Catholicosates have emerged in the course of history. The existence of two independent Catholicosates is still vital necessity for many reasons. Therefore, we are called and urged by our church and people all over the world to work together within the context of and with the profound sense of belonging to one church and one people avoiding all kinds of dualities and competitions which harm our unity. We must become co-workers assisting each other in our common mission."

It remains to be seen whether such discussion will trickle down to the rank and file clergy and laity. For now, the prospects of church unity are not very bright. It is expected that the status quo of the Armenian Church will remain the same in the next few years, with only some cosmetic changes.

Biography

CATHOLICOS ARAM I KESHISHIAN was born in Beirut, in 1947. He was educated at the Armenian Seminary in Antelias, the Near East School of Theology, the American University of Beirut, the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, Switzerland, and Fordham University, New York, where he received his Ph.D. degree in systematic and contemporary theology and ecumenics.

He was ordained a priest in 1968. While studying at Fordham University, he was elected locum tenens of the diocese of Lebanon in 1978. Subsequently, in 1979 he was elected primate of Lebanon and received episcopal ordination from H.H. Karekin II in 1980.

Having been a very active in the ecumenical movement, he is currently the Moderator of the World Council of Churches. His term of office ends in 1998. He has authored a dozen volumes on contemporary theological and ecumenical issues, among them: *The Will of Rebuilding* (Armenian); *The Witness of the Armenian Church in a Diaspora Situation*; *The Christian Witness at the Crossroads in the Middle East*; *Conciliar Fellowship: a model of unity*; *Orthodox Perspective on Mission* (English); as well as numerous essays and articles in Armenian, French, English, Arabic and ecumenical publications. -HT

CATHOLICOS KAREKIN I'S ADDRESS ON THE OCCASION OF CONSECRATION OF CATHOLICOS ARAM I OF CILICIA

July 1, 1995 • Antelias, Lebanon

Faithful and loyal people of God and children of the Armenia nation:

This day is one of the most joyous days in the history of the Armenian Church. This day is one of the most luminous and beautiful days in the long and continuous, centuries-old history of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Today, the Armenian Church in its entirety is here—one heart, one soul, one will, and one vision. Today, on behalf of all of you, dipping my pen in the blood that flows out of our hearts, I sign this day as one of the happiest and most meaningful pages of Armenian history. I kneel down with most humble feelings, and looking up to heaven, I give thanks to God for granting me, his lowly and humble servant, the honor to become the conduit of this most joyous occasion. Here in Antelias, I myself received Catholicossal consecration and today I performed Catholicossal consecration.

Three months ago, in our Armenian nation's *holiest of holies*—the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin—by the election of the nation, I was called to the most difficult and supreme responsibility by becoming Catholicos of All Armenians. Glory to you O God, that I received Catholicossal consecration in this Cathedral and today, through my weak hands, that same consecration is passed onto my dear brother, Catholicos Aram. I have with me the respective Patriarchs of Holy Jerusalem and Constantinople, archbishops and bishops from all of our Hierarchical Sees: the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia, Patriarchate of Jerusa-

lem and Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Dear Friends, today the Armenian Church extended a golden bridge of unity and wholeness in the panorama of its history. I pray that this wholeness may remain solid, healthy and progressive in the service of God and in the service of our people and church.

The second source of my happiness is the fact that I was granted the great fortune to be the first Catholicos of All Armenians who was elected and enthroned at a time when our fatherland, Armenia, is an independent state.

Today, dear Brother [Catholicos Aram], you also are consecrated at a time when our fatherland is independent and when there is a rebirth in the life of the Diaspora. These realities place upon you huge responsibilities to further advance the process of rebirth in the life of our church and nation.

The third source of my happiness is the fact that this consecration is taking place on the soil of our dear Lebanese fatherland, in the presence of the most honorable President, His Excellency Elias Hraoui, and those high ranking officials who accompany him: the Prime Minister, representative of the President of the Parliament, and other government and parliamentary officials, as well as representatives of foreign diplomatic missions.

Lebanon also is living a period of rebirth, and you, [dear Brother], as Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, having

your headquarters on this Lebanese soil—where I lived and worked for forty-four years—also bring the complete and unre-served participation of our people in the rebuilding of the Lebanese fatherland.

Finally, the fourth source of my happiness is the fact that the heads and representatives of all Christian churches—from the East and the West—are with us. I greet you all. The unity of our Armenian Church is further strengthened by the expression of the spirit of unity of the Christian Church.

May God bless this Catholicossal consecration and may He make it a source of goodness for our people—not only within the boundaries of the Catholicosate of Cilicia, but also for the entire Armenian Church. As the new pontiff [Aram I] himself affirmed right after his election, and as we have announced it many times in the Mother See of Etchmiadzin—the Armenian Church does not have any other path, but the path of united cooperation. For this I feel extremely happy because I am one of the servants of that unity and its practical expression. May God make me worthy to see more of those bright days.

I pray with these wishes. Our Church—the hope and light of the Armenians, the source of our unity—may remain unshakable for the glory of God, for the pride of our people, for the edification of our motherland, and for the growth of our Lebanese fatherland, forever, AMEN.

**Translated by H. Tchilingirian*

Selections

THANK YOU LORD

BY PANOS ARSLANIAN

Amid unfriendly gestures,
On which is built our lives,
When our tongues are blades
of sword,
I try to cool down and say
thank you Lord.

To be in a hurry running everywhere,
Days and nights reach nowhere,
When darkness makes our sight
too short,
I kneel and sigh
thank you Lord.

To see goodness in a world full of hate,
To be calm in a life full of rage,
When no one is ready to hear
His word,
I fall down and cry
thank you Lord.

Among souls sweet and gentle,
Celebrate life where everyone burns
like a candle.
When everywhere are found workers in His fields,
I rejoice and claim
thank you Lord.

To be assured that we will
be rewarded,
For a life full of deeds is recorded,
When our joy is a heavenly home,
I sing aloud and say
thank you Lord!

LIFE'S SO SWEET

BY PANOS ARSLANIAN

When you see life in itself,
You've got to know just for yourself,
Pleasure is meant to do you good,
Unless you find someone to soothe.

Sweet so sweet is life for you,
But don't forget your child needs you,
To love him is your greatest duty,
Help him to grow in God truly.

Life's so sweet unless you find,
A poor, a needy to help,
They all will wait on you because,
You're the one for them God chose.

So sweet and bright life is to be,
When you try to set yourself free,
From your duties all day ahead,
To whom the Lord wants you to send.

MY PRAYER

BY PANOS ARSLANIAN

Lord, my gentle refuge,
Lord, my unfailing bodyguard,
Lord, my sacred communion,
Lord, my simple companion,
Lord, my daily provider,
Lord, my righteous lawyer,
Lord, my endless forgiver,
Lord, my highest sanctity,
Lord, my patient teacher,
Lord, my great faith,
Lord, my divine treasure,
Lord, my humble prayer.

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