



The Centre for Eastern Christianity
Heythrop College, University of London
Michaelmas Term Lecture Series

The Armenian Church, Society and Politics

The costs and challenges of the Soviet legacy in Armenia and the Diaspora

Dr Hratch Tchilingirian
Oriental Institute, University of Oxford

TUESDAY 4TH NOVEMBER 2014 6.00-7.30 PM

INTRODUCTION TO THE ARMENIAN CHURCH: PAST AND PRESENT

The history of the Armenian Church is intimately intertwined with the history of the Armenian people. This introductory lecture will explore the Church's role over the centuries not only in religious matters, but also in political, educational, cultural and social institutions that defined the communal life of Armenians living in different empires. Particular attention will be given to the "secularising" effects of state-imposed constitutions -- the *Polozhenie* (Statute) of 1836 in the Russian Empire and the National Constitutions of 1863 in the Ottoman Empire -- and how they coalesce with the secularisation of society in modern times.

TUESDAY 11TH NOVEMBER 2014 6.00-7.30 PM

THE SOVIET REGIME AND DECLINE OF THE CHURCH AND RELIGION

This lecture will discuss the establishment of Soviet rule in Armenia and the near extinction of the institutional church, especially in the 1920's, 30's and 40's. The Church suffered heavily under decades of Soviet rule, anti-religious propaganda and was stripped bare to its liturgical functions. This process furthered the "secularisation" of the church that had started in the 19th century. Particular focus will be on the relationship between the Armenian Church and the Soviet-State in the context of the 'Repatriation' of Armenians from the Diaspora to Soviet Armenia in the mid-1940s.

TUESDAY 18TH NOVEMBER 2014 6.00-7.30 PM

THE SOVIET REGIME AND THE 'SECULARISATION' OF THE CHURCH

Although the persecution of the Church eased after Stalin's death in 1953, this session will focus on the effects of decades of state-sponsored atheistic indoctrination on both society and the Church in Soviet Armenia and the USSR. It will pay particular attention to the state of the church in the 1950's, the conflict between the two Hierarchical Sees of Ejmiatsin and Cilicia and the long tenure of Romania-born Catholicos Vazgen I of

Armenians, which had ushered a new period in the life of the Church, albeit with new sets of issues.

TUESDAY 25TH NOVEMBER 2014 6.00-7.30 PM

POST-SOVIET SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DISLOCATION AND "RETURN" OF RELIGION

The transition from decades of “ungodliness” under Communism to “knowledge of God” in a newly independent country appeared to be more complex, problematic and difficult. Neither the society nor the religious establishment were prepared to accept the unexpected realities of freedom and liberty. This session will present some of the key dimensions of this process. Starting with a brief presentation of the *glasnost* and *perestroika* period for context, it will then focus on the critical issues since Armenia’s independence.

Hratch Tchilingirian is a faculty member of the Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford. From 2002 to March 2012 he taught and held various positions at the Judge Business School, University of Cambridge, and was co-founder of the Eurasia Research Centre in Cambridge. Dr Tchilingirian has published extensively and lectures on minorities in contemporary Middle East; the Armenian Church; Diaspora; Turkish-Armenian relations; and the Caucasus. His research interests include sociology of religion, identity politics, diaspora studies, and transnationalism. Publications: “Il catholicos e le sedi gerarchiche della Chiesa Apostolica Armenia: storia, problem e prospettive” in L. Vaccaro & B. L. Zekiyani (eds.), *Storia religiosa dell’Armenia* (Milano: I.T.L., Centro Ambrosiano, 2010): pp. 189-212; "Modern ‘Believers’ in an Ancient Church" in: M. Bruneau, I. Hassiotis, M. Hovanessian & C. Mouradian (éds), *Arméniens et Grecs en diaspora: approches comparatives*, Athenes: E.F.A., 2007, pp. 401-508; "In Search of Relevance: Church and Religion in Armenian since Independence", in: B. Balci & R. Motika, (eds.), *Religion et politique dans le Caucase post-Sovietique*. Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose; 2007, pp. 277-311; "The Catholicos and the Hierarchical Sees of the Armenian Church" in Anthony O'Mahony, (ed.), *Eastern Christianity. Studies in Modern History, Religion and Politics*. London: Melisende, 2004, 140-159. Forthcoming: "The Armenian Apostolic Church" in: *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twenty-First Century*. London, Routledge, 2014; "Minority within Minorities: Armenian communities in the Middle East between imposed realities and uncertain future" in Erica C.D. Hunter (ed.) *Religious Minorities in the Middle East and North Africa: A Complete Survey of Non-Muslim Communities*. I. B. Tauris, 2014.

All are welcome.

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