

Window

view of the Armenian Church

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1915-1990

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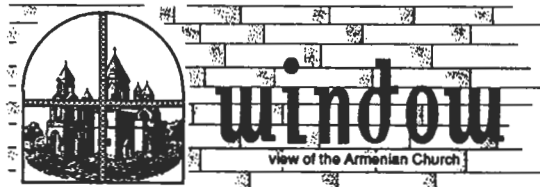
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On the Cover: *A partial list of clergy martyred in 1915. (See page 8)*

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EDITORIAL

GENOCIDE! It is a word that haunts every Armenian. It is a word that evokes disturbing nightmares, anguish, hatred and the reality of unserved justice. At every commemoration, we enumerate the unspeakable horrors of 1915 and renew our vows to immortalize the lost lives of 1.5 Million Armenians. Yet seldom do we speak about the loss and destruction of the Armenian Church and Her devoted servants, the clergy, who did not give up their role as the true shepherds of Christ until the last drop of blood seeped from their bodies.

It is to their eternal and blessed memory that we dedicate this issue of *Window*. With this issue, we turn our views back 75 years and take a glimpse of the pre-Genocide Armenian Church. For the first time in the English language, we present the monumental work of Teotig, a scribe who tediously recorded the lives and the martyrdom of the Armenian clergy. In admiration and awe of the courageous lives of these clergy, the A. C. R. A. GROUP research team, headed by Fr. Vazken Movsesian, has been compiling a data base of information on the Armenian Church during the Genocide. Excerpts from this research are presented in this issue with statistical and analytical charts. Fr. Vazken Movsesian renders further insight and reflection on the work of Teotig and its significance to us. On the other hand, Vigen Guroian addresses the issue of remembrance in the context of contemporary Armenian reality, and presents a more meaningful and renewed understanding of Armenian martyrdom. Finally, Deacon Hratch Tchilingirian discusses the problem of canonization of the victims and provides an analysis of its implications.

With this issue, we open our *Window* to see the lives of the true saints and heroes of the Armenian Church. Their legacy to us is the challenge to emulate their sacrificial example.

“... THE ARMENIAN CHURCH IS A NATIONAL CHURCH IN THAT IT IS HER DUTY TO SAVE ARMENIAN SOULS. The Armenian Church has only one main purpose, that is to deal with souls. . .the salvation of Armenian souls. When the Armenian Church is successful in saving the individual souls of Armenians, then the result would be nothing but to have Armenians who would possess the Armenian spirit, Armenians who would have interest in Armenian culture, language and art, individuals who would have the enthusiasm to appreciate all loveliness. Each in his own way, each according to his cup and mold by drinking from the same fountain of the soul. Even those who do not have ‘religious interest’ should readily bow before the purpose and work that the Armenian Church performs and should perform as a spiritual institution.

“The impact of the Genocide that our people sustained has wounded the Armenian soul in different aspects of its existence, it has fractured the physical and spiritual reality of the Armenian nation and her spiritual culture.

“Executioner Talat Pasha considered the Armenian clergy to be the most dangerous element. He ordered his subordinates to use the most severe measures to exterminate the clergy. In a secret order sent to the governor of Aleppo, he writes, ‘It should be noted that first of all the clergy should be exterminated, we have received information that individual priests have been sent to precarious places, like Syria and Jerusalem. This kind of dispensations are considered unforgivable infringement of orders. To them exile should mean complete extermination. I advise you to execute according to this order.’”

—Archbishop Torkom Manoogian (Patriarch of Jerusalem)
The Loss of the Armenian Church During the Genocide (Armenian), New York 1972

Reflections on the meaning of
the Seventy-fifth Anniversary
of the Armenocide

How shall we Remember?

Vigen Guroian

Some fifteen years ago, I began collecting oral histories of survivors of the Armenian Genocide. Among those whose stories I heard were members of the Richmond, Virginia Armenian community, where my wife June and I lived at the time. One of these was a lady, born in Zeitun in south central Turkey. When she was a small child her family moved to nearby Marash where in the Spring of 1915 the deportations began. Her father already had been conscripted into the Turkish military never again seen by his family, presumably a victim of the Turkish policy of conscripting Armenian males into the military and executing them. She and her remaining family were marched that year across Turkey into the Syrian desert, a march which in her memory lasted forever. During the journey, this young girl of seven witnessed the deaths of some seventy relatives. Only she and her mother survived.

At the close of our final meeting together, I asked her how she could believe in God in view of her great personal loss and tragedy. At first she demurred. She said that she was not a priest or a theologian. I insisted, surely she had thought about this matter. "Yes," she said, she had. Some of the men and women of her generation had succumb to bitterness and resentment, even anger against God. They would accuse God, "Why did God do this to us?"

She, however, had not grown bitter. There were, of course, moments of doubt and questioning even at this time in her life. But her memories would return to her grandfather, a man of exceptional faith. For often during those terrible, violent days of the march, when she was tired and her small feet ached and she was thirsty and hungry and wanted to stop but did not for fear of the soldiers whip, she would ask her grandfather, "Grandpa, where are we going?" he would answer, "We are going to Jerusalem." I began to hate Jerusalem. I would say, "I don't like Jerusalem. I want to go home," and there would be tears in his eyes. He was weeping. But I did not know why. Only now I understand.

This patriarch of her family died in Syria. However, before his death he left his family with one command and one final request. The command was, "Even if they should put a knife to your neck, do not deny your faith. Death lasts only one moment. Renouncing your faith means giving up an eternity of joy with God." His final request was that he be given a Christian burial. And so he was. Whereas the others whom the little girl saw die were carried away by oxen cart to unmarked mass graves, he was buried by his daughter-in-law. He had asked that at his burial a passage from II Timothy be read. The lady could not recall the identity of the passage. But I doubt not that it



was II Timothy 4:6-8. "As for me, already my life is being poured out on the altar, and the hour for my departure is upon me. I have run the great race, I have finished the course, I have kept faith. And now the prize awaits me, the great garland (crown) of righteousness, which the Lord, the all-just judge, will award me on that great Day; and it is not for me alone, but for all who have set their hearts on his coming appearance" (NEB). Finally, she said, "As I remember my grandfather, I also remember Jesus when he was crucified." "This," she said, "is what gives me hope and sustains me. And I believe in the resurrection and that we will live even after this death on Earth . . . Maybe God means the Armenians to be an example for the world."

How shall we remember? I believe that the answer to that question was given to me some 15 years ago when I questioned this lady. Yet even before Armenians ask themselves the question: How shall we remember? there is posited already the imperative to remember. A wise man once said, "Memory is the secret of redemption." And so it certainly must be for Armenians. To paraphrase a famous passage from Armenian literature: We remember in order to live. Death not comprehended is mortality; death perceived is immortality.

There is then a moral and political significance to our remembering. If Armenians forget the deaths of a million and one half and in doing so allow the world to forget also, they surely will have issued a warrant for future Talaat Pashas, Stalins, Adolph Hitlers, Idi Amins, or Pol Pots to carry out their murderous schemes against people with whose skin color, religion, ethnic origin or political persuasion they find fault. This remembrance and struggle must never be selfish. Such remembrance and struggle must be done in the spirit of love and sacrifice as an offering of self in solidarity with all suffering people on this strife torn and agonized planet.

Centuries ago Rabbi Hillel wrote: "If I am not for myself who will be, but if I am only for myself what am I?" Allow me to add to Rabbi Hillel's words: "If a people who have suffered murder at the hands of an evil government do not defend the inviolability of their own national spirit and culture, what are they, but if they do not voice that truth in defense of other peoples who have suffered a similar injustice how can they be taken seriously? Armenians ought to be at the front lines of the human rights struggle world-wide. If they were, their own plea in behalf of themselves would be far more persua-

sive.

I am deeply troubled, however, by the obsessive and narrow use to which the Genocide has been put in order to reassert Armenian identity and fortify Armenian nationalism—just as some Jews have used the Holocaust to reassert Jewish identity and deflect criticisms of the state of Israel. We speak of martyrs. Yet more often than not we mean victims; and we plead to the world that we are the true innocents. This is a dangerous state of mind, one to which, sadly, the Armenian Church also, has willing contributed. Having thrown itself into the struggle for justice, the Church has neglected its primary responsibility for healing the afflicted nation. It has lacked the courage to faithfully tell the Gospel story and cast the suffering of the Armenian people in the context of the story of the only One who was truly innocent and yet was unjustly nailed to a cross. That crime was not rectified but, nevertheless, opened the way to salvation.

Every April 24th, Armenians in all places mark a day of remembrance for those who died as victims and as martyrs of the Armenian Genocide. On that day, year after year, the Armenian Church has joined in the demand for justice. Yet even those most sympathetic to our cause outside of the Armenian community have advised us that while justice is important there is no guarantee it will come; nor may it be what is most needed. As Professor Roger W. Smith of the College of William and Mary has written: "The emphasis must be on truth and healing" even more than justice.

Frankly, the world may choose to forget what happened to the Armenian people seventy-five years ago. It is even possible our children will choose to forget the Genocide if all such remembering brings is the world's denial and the burden of being victims; and all that it unleashes is the gut ripping tiger anger. Such remembering must serve a greater end than the demand for an earthly justice, a justice the world may or may not grant us. It is that purpose about which I have chosen to address. And this requires talking about Christian faith. For something devastating happened to Armenian Christianity in the Genocide. For many faith became impossible. For others the habit persisted but not the conviction. Yet how little we have heard about this—except the anguished cries of our poets. "Let us swear," wrote Yeghishé Charents, "that when we find/God in paradise offering comfort/to make amends for our pain,/ let us swear that we will refuse/saying No, send

us to hell again./ We choose hell. You made us know it well./Keep your paradise for the Turk." Thus, even beyond the moral and political significance of the Genocide, there is a profound religious dimension to it—one which needs to be addressed.

Allow me to begin by telling a story of the Armenian writer Teotig who collected accounts of the clergy and their martyrdom during the great catastrophe. One day in 1915, as in so many Armenian towns and villages, the 800 families of Kourd Belen (Turkish, meaning Wolf's Hill) near Izmir (ancient Nicomedia) were given orders to evacuate their homes and form a caravan of deportation. The pastor of the village was an eighty-five year old priest, Fr. Khoren Hampartsoomian, who for all his years as a priest had served the people of Kourd Belen. Fr. Hampartsoomian was instructed to lead his people out of the village. As the procession of bewildered, frightened and disoriented Armenians left the outskirts of the village, nearby Turks came out to view the exiles, and taunted the priest, calling to him, "Good luck old man. Who are you going to bury today?" The old man replied: "Yes. God is dead, we are rushing to his funeral."

There is such a thing as a righteous anger with God. Job is the greatest scriptural example of such anger. Also, despair, even a sense of desolation, is sometimes a moment in the movement of faith. We cannot know for certain the feelings which welled up within the heart of Khoren Hampartsoomian on that terrible day in 1915; whether it was anger or despair or both which made him call out: "This time we are going to the funeral of God." Could the old man's feelings have been like those of Jesus who on the cross exclaimed in his agony,

For many faith became impossible. For others the habit persisted but not the conviction...

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46 RSV).

Perhaps at that moment Khoren Hampartsoomian experienced the near destruction of the soul—that ultimate desolation—which

became also the experience of the Armenian people. It would be an untruthful remembrance of what happened to the Armenian people in those fateful years not to acknowledge the near total physical and spiritual destruction which they endured. But such despair and desolation are not experiences which Armenians are called upon to perpetuate. Indeed the persistence of such despair and desolation in persons or in an entire people is not a virtue but a deadly vice. Neither should Armenians perpetuate anger at God. For certainly God cannot be blamed for what men have wrought. But, some will inject, "God should have intervened." And this at what cost? Would we have God withdraw from us that freedom which he built into our very nature, which is itself the very dignity that we share with our Creator as beings made in his own image? Would we have God release us from responsibility for our own actions? Indeed the Turk, not God, is responsible for the horror of human carnage which seventy-five years ago flooded the earth with the blood of his slain brothers and sisters.

A Jewish theologian of the Holocaust has written: "God suffers not on account of what man does to him. What could man do to God? He suffers because of what man does to himself and his brother." I believe that for every one of the million and one half men, women and children whose lives and deaths Armenians commemorate on April 24th, the Son bled upon the heavenly altar and the Father himself wept for every victim as well as every victimizer. God was there among the tortured, molested, starved and butchered. He who became flesh, lived among the powerless and suffered an ignoble death on the cross, was also present in the burning churches, on the winding death marches through mountain and valley, in the bloodied waters of the ancient Euphrates and the desert ovens of Der El Zor. It was his body which was ravaged by hunger, lacerated by the horseman's whip, pierced by the gendarme's bayonet, broken by mountain climb, devoured by vulture and wild beast, torn from mother's breast, dashed against

rock and stone, thrown in flesh choked rivers, swollen and cooked in desert heat, and buried in mass of earth and human wreckage.

God in Christ has made his tabernacle among us. He has suffered the weaknesses of



our flesh and taken up in his dying our protest against death. I have said already that the issue is not one, finally, of justice or injustice. Rather it is how we who confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, can make of our suffering and dying a righteous witness to his promises of eternal life. If we are truly followers and imitators of Jesus Christ then we are as the grandfather said to the little girl all sojourners on our way to Jerusalem. Sometimes our lack of faith has led us to protest, even to hate Jerusalem and the King under whose discipline we placed ourselves when in the baptismal waters we confessed before many witnesses our willingness to "fight the good fight of the faith; [and] take hold of the eternal life to which we are called" (I Timothy 6:12 RSV). The Lord of resurrection and life invites human beings to freely follow Him, but the path they must take once they have decided to do so is one tread already by Him up the rock of Golgotha with the awful weight of the cross upon His back and the agony of the crucifixion before Him. For Christ the glory of Palm Sunday was followed by the humiliation of that Friday which we who follow Him dare call good because we in faith have the hope for life eternal, He having trampled down for us Death by death. Is it, therefore, so incomprehensible that the glory of Christian Armenia should in time have been revealed as the prelude to the Golgotha of 1915? Armenians had more than intimations of this throughout their history: the early persecutions under foreign domination, the devastation of the Memluk invaders, the slave yoke of Ottoman rule.

"Maybe," the lady said, "God means for Armenians to be an example to the Earth." Having endured the death of their physical body, the loss of the earthly homeland, and been dispersed throughout the world as sojourners in strange lands, one would have hoped that Armenians could have recaptured their biblical minds, for Armenians are a biblical people. Were they to regain their biblical vision, Armenians could recognize and therefore rededicate themselves to that Christian witness and discipleship which their forbearers so willingly took up and for which so many of them gave up their lives. How shall Armenians remember? By remembering God first who called Abraham to "go out

to a country which God had promised to give him. He left his own country without knowledge of where he was going. By faith he lived as a foreigner in the country that God had promised him. For Abraham was waiting for the city which God had designed and built, the city with permanent foundations" (Hebrews 11:8-10 TEV). I am not one who spurns the deep desire of many, I think most Armenians, for a restored homeland. I bring up this subject because in remembering the martyrs of the Armenocide, Armenians must not make the terrible error of reducing, indeed trivializing, their martyrdom to merely a sacrifice for nationhood, culture or any other human creation one calls Armenian. For "Behold," exclaimed the prophet Isaiah, "the nations are like a drop from a bucket, /and are accounted as the dust on the scales;.../All the nations are as nothing before him, /they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness" (Isaiah 40:15-17 RSV).

How shall Armenians remember the martyrs? May they be remembered as among those faithful whom the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews recalled.

"It was in faith that all these persons died. They did not receive the things God promised, but from a long way off they saw and welcomed them, and admitted openly that they were foreigners and refugees on earth. Those who say such things make it clear that they are looking for a country of their own. They did not keep thinking about the country they had left; if they had, they would have had the chance to return. Instead, it was a better country they longed for, the heavenly country. And so God is not ashamed to have them call Him their God, for He has prepared a city for them" (Hebrews 11:13-16 TEV).

... remembering must serve a greater end than the demand for an earthly justice, a justice the world may or may not grant us.

We have a responsibility to the martyrs. Before all else we must perpetuate the faith for which they died. If our faith should expire then the martyrs' example and the hope which Armenians rightly discern in their deaths is lost to

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TEOTIG:

Golgotha

of the

Armenian

Clergy



By 1921, only six years after the Genocide, a scribe using the pen name "Teotig" had compiled a volume of Armenian Church casualties entitled, *Golgotha of the Armentan Clergy*. Chronicled in this book are the perils of the Armenian Church during the 1915 Genocide. For the first time, the 412 page work written in Armenian has been transcribed into English and set as a data base by the A.C.R.A. Group research team.

The book introduces the reader to 1252 clergymen specifically, with brief biographical information and descriptions of the atrocities imposed upon these clerics. This volume by no means is an exhaustive list of losses suffered by the Armenian Church in 1915. Teotig assures the reader that some lists are fragmented and certain towns and villages had no remaining survivors from whom information could be gathered. For instance, in the town of Hiusenig, (near Kharbert) all the priests were murdered along with the townspeople. Clergy records did not survive. The same is true of the village of Khoylou as well as other localities. Nevertheless, Teotig's work presents a strong base and by all means is a monumental effort. It allows us to take a glimpse at the pre-Genocide Armenian Church and to understand the magnitude of the damage to the Church, to Her people and the spiritual decay which has ensued in the Armenian Church community over the past 75 years.

Golgotha of the Armentan Clergy is full of horror stories page after page, all tied together by a common thread of suffering and martyrdom. Teotig interviewed and compiled data from a variety of sources, many were first hand witnesses and clergy who escaped the atrocities one way or another. To understand the scope of his work, he confesses that the massacres were so precisely orchestrated that often villagers did not know of the destruction in a neighboring village a mile away. Yet he was able to compile and document the witness of 1252 of these clergy and their flocks.

The register includes among the most notable victims, Gomidas Vartabed Soghomonian to the most seemingly obscure, such as Krikor Kahana Zartarian, a priest of Sepastia whose finger nails were pulled, horse shoes nailed to his feet and then his skin was butchered off his body, because of his refusal to deny his faith.

It is more than evident that the Armenian Church suffered immensely in numbers alone. Seventy five years after the fact, we still have a long road toward recovery. The Armenian population has steadily increased but the number of clergy to meet the ever growing needs of the people has not.

Pages 12& 13 contain a small sample of our findings with analysis. During the Fall of 1990 the A.C.R.A.G. will publish the Teotig data base. This marks a significant contribution toward the study of the Armenian Genocide. Copies of the publication may be ordered through the Group offices. —VKM



Reflections on Teotig

Fallen Grains of Wheat...

Fr. Vazken Movsesian

The word "martyr" conjures many images in our minds. Most of those images have little, if any, relevance for life today. Martyrdom is an abstract idea for most. Every April 24, Armenians are reintroduced to the word. A martyr, we are told, is one who voluntarily opts for death rather than deny his faith. Like a cliché, the definition rolls off our tongues with ease as we ascribe it to the 1.5 million Armenians of the 1915 Genocide.

Like all Armenians, I had heard the word used. I had heard the stories of family and friends. I had read the books. I had even given my share of "Martyrs' Day" speeches, but "martyr" never had more meaning than after reading Teotig's *Golgotha of the Armenian Clergy*. It was no longer an abstract term. Furthermore, I found the Armenian Church of 1915 in a paradoxical situation. Superficially, what appeared to be a church on the verge of death, was in fact the Armenian Church living its most vibrant days of Christian witness.

BEYOND THE NUMBERS

Now that Teotig's material has been transcribed and processed, the data can be evaluated in many ways. In mere numbers alone, it is evident that the Armenian Church suffered immensely. Seventy five years after the

fact, we still have a long road toward recovery. Teotig's work, however, presents much more than numbers. My intention here is not to analyze the data rather it is to reflect on the actions of these clergy and the implications of those actions for us. The documentation of the massacres gives us real life stories — examples — of clergymen, from whom we, as clergy and faithful of the Church 75 years removed from the tragedy, have much to learn. Although a few of the clergy of 1915 denied their faith, the overwhelming majority did not compromise themselves as Christians and became worthy of the title "martyr." These clerics lead the Armenian people through that same road of martyrdom. Today, in retrospect, we have some serious questions to ask ourselves regarding the value of that decision and action. But first let us look at the pre-Genocide Church, which obviously was a more viable institution than the Armenian Church today, by virtue of more clergy, greater and closer contact with the people, Her ability to operate within hostile circumstances and most importantly, by the fact that Her followers did not abandon Her in these trying times.

What was the drawing power of the pre-Genocide Church? Why were Armenians determined not to compromise their faith, the Faith of the Orthodox Church? In the village of

Kuvner, Bitlis, for example, the 400 Armenian families out of fear of persecution practiced their "worship" — not private prayer, but organized worship — in their homes.

How did the Church move men such that they refused worldly pursuits and survival, opting for the Cross instead? For example, Daniel Der Stephanian, a young revolutionary, immigrated to the United States in 1909 but returned to Gudoutz's St. Garabed monastery, was ordained as Fr. Stephan and as a priest lead his suffering people. Or, Fr. Vartan Hagopian (Moush, Bitlis), who upon noticing that the Kurdish-speaking Armenians of Slivan (Dikranagerd) were without a pastor and on the verge of religious conversion notified the Patriarch and was assigned to the region. Fr. Vartan was martyred with his flock after returning them to the fold of the Mother Church.

What kept the clergymen loyal to the Church despite the hardships and humiliation they had to bear because of their association? In Sepastia, from the prelate down to the parish priest, clerics could not walk the streets without ridicule from the Turks. As an everyday ritual the Turks would curse and blaspheme the Armenian's cross and faith. In Bourhan, when the village executioner finished torturing Fr. Khoren Hambartzoumian with unthinkable methods, as an ultimate indignation, he placed a dog in Fr. Khoren's lap and demanded that the good priest baptize the mutt. Fr. Khoren was butchered.

What was the redeeming value of the Faith that these priest would demand from their

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"cursed" soil and swallow it as
communion while confessing,
"For all the sins which I have
committed, in thought..."*

parishioners loyalty until the end? Fr. Ashod Avedian, (Erzeroum) was among 4000 men separated from the women in the village of Tzitogh and shackled together. He counselled the men to be brave in the face of death, having

them pray in unison, "Lord, have mercy." And in the only sacramental gesture possible, he had the men take the "cursed" soil and swallow it as communion while confessing, "For all the sins which I have committed, in thought...."

Questions about the authority and influence of the Holy Church continue to form within our minds as we read the multitude of stories of the men who not only preached the Faith but lived and died for it. The Church carried great weight in the lives of the people in 1915 as underscored by their martyrdom. Interestingly enough, the Church was not viewed as sanctuary, as is common during times of crisis. The Armenian Church of 1915 was anything but a safe haven or refuge for Her people. As Teotig writes, "At that time the intolerance of the three Islamic nations (the Turks, the Persian and the Kurds) toward Christianity had reached its pinnacle." The Armenian clergy were the symbols of Christianity that the Muslim Turks were fanatically molesting. To be associated with the Armenian Church, let alone be a part of it, was the same as signing one's own execution orders. We refer to the victims of the Genocide as martyrs precisely for this reason: they willingly opted for association with the Church — to be identified as Christians — and were therefore denied existence.

Here lies the key to our questioning. The martyrdom of the people tells us that the Church in fact filled more than a social need for them. The pre-Genocide Armenian Church was exclusively a house of God. She was the Christian identity of the people and not much else. Because Armenians lived within their *millet*, Armenian community life was already defined. The Church did not have to take on the responsibility of perpetuating the nation. She had a tremendous influence within the lives of the people, because the people understood it as God ordained. Armenians did not understand, "In

the world you have tribulation: but courage! I have overcome the world," (Jn. 16:33) as a statement made by a mere mortal but by the Living God. Armenians took to heart the assurance, "Blessed are you when men revile you and



persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven..." (Mt. 5:11-12) because it was guaranteed by the Saviour of the World.

How else can we explain or understand martyrdom? It is only in these terms. Given the option to live or die, who would chose death, unless of course, the person had a doubtless belief that the "Lord is my Shepherd... even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for thou art with me..." (Ps. 23:1,4). Who would take the torture and humiliation of the cross, unless one knew for certain that the cross was not an end, but a means to the end. The Armenian Christian martyr of 1915 firmly believed in the resurrection of Christ and the guarantee of the same for his/herself.

The operative word in the definition of martyrdom is "willingly," which implies the victims had the option to do otherwise. Some of the sources for Teotig were in fact converts to Islam. These were the few that were able to escape and live to tell the story. Teotig refers to the conversion as acceptance of the "severe order" (*khisd hraman*). By way of explanation, he inserts within parenthesis the word "Islamized." Though the number of these converts was relatively miniscule, the fact that some converted asserts that the option for conversion, and therefore life was available.

THE TRUE LOSSES OF THE CHURCH

The 1915 Church in Turkey was well established by virtue of Her existence within the Armenian communities for centuries. The Armenian Church in the diaspora has only a living history of 75-100 years. The Church today is built upon the ruins of 1915. The losses of the Armenian Church were far greater than the decrease in the number of clergy. The Church lost Her impact over Armenians and lost Her place as a necessity among Her people. Her preoccupation with survival in the post-Genocide years moved Her from the sacred realm to the secular. The objective of the Church was compromised by

the necessity to build. The devastation of the Genocide was too great upon Church leadership so there was no one "manning the ship."

Meanwhile, we the post-genocide generations, found ourselves rebuilding without the proper "floor plans." For us, the Church was not only a religious organization but a means toward national preservation. Without the necessary religious grounding, coupled with societal norms which advocate no absolutes, God lost us to the temptation of self-assurance. If the Armenian Church was to be rebuilt, it was because of our own efforts, we thought, and not God's will. God was helpless. After all, where was God when we needed him most? Surely He did not have the power to rebuild our nation? God lost His strength and most importantly His healing power. The Armenian nation had been severely wounded and if anyone was going to heal us, it would be ourselves. And so, our community and church shifted from God-centeredness to self-centeredness. Our heros changed. We began singing the praises of self-made industrialists who were now financing, rebuilding and *healing* the Church.

ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACH-THANI?

Perhaps one of the most pondered questions by people is, why evil? Many volumes on this subject line the shelves of theological and philosophical libraries. The question is simple: If God is good and if God is omnipotent then why does evil exist? Either God is not good or God is not all-powerful (e.g. He has no dominion over evil). The attempt at defending God's goodness or omnipotence in

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the face of evil is called a theodicy.

Armenians at the time of the Genocide as well as today continue to ask this question. The Genocide of 1915 and more recently the
continued on page 14

Armenian Clergy Victims of 1915

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	Victims		Martyred	Survived
Orthodox	1054	84.2%	1008	47
Roman Catholic	145	11.6%	136	3
Protestant	53	4.2%	46	3
TOTAL	1252	100%		

REGIONAL DATA

Provinces	— ORTHODOX —			— ROMAN CATHOLIC —			— PROTESTANT —	TOTALS
	Celebate Bishops	Married Priests	Priests	Monsignors	Priests	Nuns	Ministers	
Istanbul	3	9	33	-	2	-	1	48
Van	2	55	92	-	1	-	-	150
Bitlis	1	13	196	1	2	-	7	220
Sepastia	2	6	154	-	15	13	11	201
Erzeroum	1	12	219	2	38	9	7	288
Kharbert	0	3	78	2	12	5	8	108
Dikranagerd	1	1	91	2	18	4	4	121
Kaghadia	2	7	73	1	12	6	15	116
TOTAL:	12	106	936	8	100	37	53	1252

CLERGY AGE

Sample	at 1915			at ordination			
	Avg. age	Minimum	Maximum	Avg. age	Minimum	Maximum	
Ortx. Bishops	12	55	44	81	28	24	37
Ortx. Cel. Priests	74	53	27	83	30	17	54
Ortx. Mar. Priest	968	53	25	105	36	18	63
R.C. Monsignor	8	58	37	69	-	-	-
R.C. Priests	100	49	26	79	26	12	60
R.C. Nuns	37	41	24	62	N/A		
Prot. Ministers	53	49	25	82	N/A		

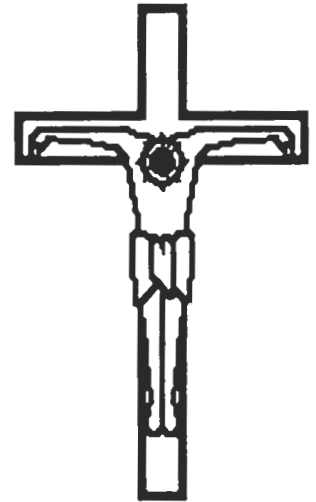
*Teotig groups the clergy by geographical area. We have further arranged the victims by church affiliation and rank.



Some of the regions, such as Van, had compiled data prior to the Genocide. A census had been conducted in that area in 1913. Though elaborate statistics of this type did not come from all areas, we use the Van figures as a sample of the entire Armenian Church situation in Turkey and draw some cross comparisons. To the facts provided by Teotig, we have juxtaposed clergy statistics to find the ratio of priest to parishioner was roughly 1:1600 or 1:260 households in Van. (These figures may be closer when considering the number of clergy that were not accounted for by Teotig). Sepastia shows a much closer ratio. To understand the magnitude of the loss suffered by the Church, we have compared these ratios with the Armenian Church situation today in Armenia—100 priests (aprox.) to 3,500,000 souls—and the Los Angeles Area—25 priests (all) to 250,000 souls.

VAN CENSUS

Region	Homes	Individuals	Clergy	RATIO	
				#Homes: 1Clergy	# Souls: 1Clergy
Van	5,822	32,084	23	253.1	1,395.0
Timar	2,525	15,411	6	420.8	2,568.5
Bergri	734	5,152	1	734.0	5,152.0
Arjesh	1,303	10,313	1	1,303.0	10,313.0
Alchavaz	810	5,889	1	810.0	5,889.0
Hayotz Tzor	1,383	8,482	1	1,383.0	8,482.0
Kavash	1,190	6,913	6	198.3	1,152.2
Garjgan	840	6,178	4	210.0	1,544.5
Arjag	1,013	6,679	n/a*		
Saratz	118	826	1	118.0	826.0
Khosab	252	1,746	1	252.0	1,746.0
Shadakh	999	6,721	13	76.8	517.0
Mogus	721	4,459	3	240.3	1,486.3
Gargar	420	3,038	n/a*		
Aghbag	482	3,505	5	96.4	701.0
Nordouz	257	1,767	1	257.0	1,767.0
Joulamerg	73	534			
Geavar	280	1,680			
TOTAL	19,222	121,377	67	260.2	1,633.5



(*These towns had already suffered losses prior to the Great Genocide.)

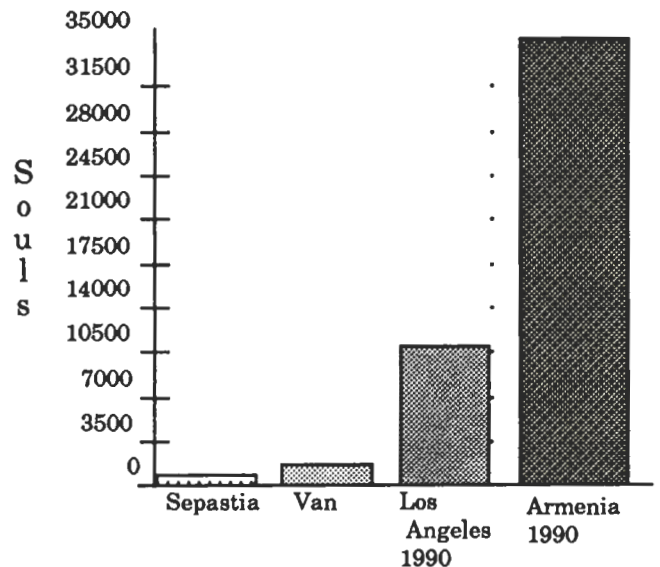
SEPASTIA CENSUS

	Souls	Clergy	RATIO Priest:Soul
Orthodox	19,040	160	1:119
Roman Catholic	170	15	1:11
Protestant	300	11	1:27
Wonderers	3,000		

A 1990 COMPARISON

	Ratio Priest:Soul
Armenia S.S.R.	1:35,000
Greater Los Angeles Area	1:10,000

Comparison Ratio of Souls: 1 Priest



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earthquake of 1988 have both given us the necessary ammunition to lash out against a seemingly weak god, who accepts our loyalties throughout the centuries and abandons us in our time of need. Could God have not prevented the execution of Talaat's orders? Could God have not prevented the extensive destruction of the earthquake?

As a pastor I have been asked the same question from parishioners who are confronted with a manifestation of evil in their lives. Why cancer? Why divorce? Why young death? The deeper questions begin to surface: Does God hear our prayers? Is it fate? Is it our destiny? Ultimately, it is the Church that is on trial. Why advocate a faith in a god who is seemingly powerless against pain? The answer is by no means an easy one. In fact, as Teotig's documentation has shown, the Church has not been spared Her share of evil. Ironically, this may very well be the beginnings of an Armenian Church theodicy.

The Church, as the Body of Christ was not rescued from evil, as neither was the actual Body of Christ, the Son of the Omnipotent. The crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ is the Church's crucifixion. Theologian Hans Kung writes, "The crucified Jesus is present in the Church as the risen Lord. Christ does not exist without the Church, the Church does not exist without Christ. Christ is for the Church not only an event in a constantly receding past, nor only an event in the future, whether near or distant. ... The Church does not derive its life only from the work which Christ did and finished in the past, nor only from the expected

century Palestine. During the Divine Liturgy, we herald, "Christ *is* among us... He who is God *is* here seated." We are invited to commune with Christ who *is*—not was—sacrificed and shared among us. We are called to share in His resurrection, as well as His passion and crucifixion. At the Turkish "Golgotha," the Body of Christ was nailed to the Cross. In that misery, the Armenian Church asked the same question Jesus asked, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me" (Mt. 27:46). Today, we echo that appeal in our personal lives as well on behalf of the Church, only to receive the same seemingly silent answer. That answer is only assumed silent when our ears are not attuned to an existence beyond this temporal one. Among the disciples who were at the foot of the Jesus' cross, certainly some thought His teachings were in vain if His loving Father was not willing to come to His rescue. But to those who trusted His teachings, their fear diminished with the anticipation of resurrection. We too are not privy to the answer, unless first we are able to trust the living words of Christ and be ready to stand in eternal vigil for the resurrection.

God's interaction with our world can not be confined to our limited understanding of time and justice. God does not prevent evil. This does not diminish the power of God nor His goodness. It shifts the responsibility to us — to be convinced by our faith and by the crucified and living Lord among us, that God's love is greater than our sense of justice. St. Nersess Shnorhali writes in the hymn of the Saturday matins, "Do not judge us by justice, rather by Your mercy grant us explanation." Justice is grounded in our temporal existence, God's mercy

transcends to the eternal. The healing power of God, to fix our wounds and abrasions is in His love not in our understanding of justice. If the resurrection of the Armenian people and Church is dependent upon human strength alone, it is doomed to fail as are all enterprises which are

built upon limited faculties. The Church *survives* today because of human efforts. She *lives* today because of Christ's eternal presence.

The Armenian clergy at the turn of the century were martyred with this understanding

Healing begins when we accept the Armenian Church as the Body of Christ, where our Lord lives in His Crucifixion and Resurrection.

future consummation of his work, but from the living and efficacious presence of Christ in the present" (*The Church*).

The crucifixion of our Lord is not to be understood as a one time event, centered in first



of Divine intervention. It is foolish to say they did not fear death; however, it is apparent from their martyrdom that they did not understand death as the final stop in a life running on hurt and pain. They believed and were convinced in the resurrection of Christ. The clergy of 1915 offer an understanding of the Church prior to Her children's physical and spiritual breakdown. At that time, the faith of the Armenian Church was no different than the faith it expounds today. What has changed however, is our perception. As workers of the Church today we have a mission to revert back to this basic understanding of the Church. The Church does not need healing, rather we do. Healing — God's healing — begins when we accept the Armenian Church as the Body of Christ, where our Lord *lives* in His Crucifixion and Resurrection. Otherwise, we are merely placing a bandage on our wounds. It is temporary, it is deceptive and will yield scare tissue.

In light of Teotig, martyrdom can no longer be an abstract idea. Rather, it is part of our commission as sons and daughters of the Armenian Church. Thank God today the Armenian Christians in America are not being forced at gun point to witness to their faith. Yet the pressure from worldly pursuits, the temptation to deny good in the face of personal gain, and the defining of the world as self-serving rather than God-serving all take their tolls upon our faith. These are the new weapons of evil. Do we question why God is not sparing us prosperity? If that prosperity has cost us our self-worth then is that not evil? Would we ever lash out against God and ask, why He is not saving us from material success? If that success has been acquired at the cost of the sanctity of family and the loss of principles, is that not evil?

Evil will always be present. It is part of a system built upon human free will. In the Garden of Eden it was the serpent, in 1915 it was the Turk, today it is the self, each demanding primary loyalty. Martyrdom for us is a denial of the evil and opting for life. This is true in our personal life as well as communal life. It begins with the acceptance of an eternal life, a life based



on the will of God, a life which defines justice by God's love and mercy.

Throughout Teotig, we read of priests who dedicated their lives to the service of the Church. Yet, tragically, many of them did not have graves nor a Church funeral. To their memory, I wish to present the Gospel passage from the funeral service. "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life" (Jn. 12:24-25). The pastors of 1915 dedicated their lives to God's Holy Church. They denied the pleasures of this life for the riches of eternal life. Like grains of wheat, they fell and died. The Faith, the Faith of the Armenian Church is the fruit they bear. As we pray to God for their eternal rest, let us at the same time partake of this fruit. This in fact is our greatest tribute to their martyrdom and their blessed memory.

A.C.R.A.G.

DATA BASE

Listing by name over 1200 martyred clergy of 1915

Categorized by:

X Name X Church X Region

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Are we ready?

Canonization of the Victims

Dn. Hratch Tchilingirian

"Since next year is the 75th anniversary of the Genocide, we propose that the preparatory activities continue for the canonization of our victims."

Joint Communique of
Catholicoi Vazken I and Karekin II
April 29, 1989, Holy Etchmiadzin

This year is the 75th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide and it seems that the "preparatory activities" are still continuing . . . so far the victims have not been canonized. There are several problems with the issue of canonizing the victims of the Genocide. However, before going into the discussion of these problems, let us briefly define what "canonization" means.

Canonization is the final declaration by the head of the Church, whereby the soul of a person or a group of persons are declared to be in heaven. After the declaration, the veneration of the person(s) as a saint is not only permitted, but ordered for the entire Church. Normally, the process of canonization is conducted by the Synod of Bishops in the Orthodox Church and the Sacred Congregation of Rites in the Roman Catholic Church, afterwards, the final declaration is made by the Patriarch or by the Supreme Pontiff. Canonization as a formal process and declaration started in the tenth century. In the

primitive Church, martyrs and later confessors were the first to be publicly venerated by the faithful. Until the tenth century, individuals among the faithful who had lead exemplary and "venerable" lives were accepted as "saints" without formal canonization by the Church.

WHO ARE THE SAINTS

The saints are an integral part of the Tradition of the ancient Churches. "The doctrine of the Church comes alive in the lives of the true believers, the saints. The saints are those who literally share the holiness of God. 'Be holy, for I your God am holy.' (Leviticus 11:44; I Peter 1:16) The lives of the saints bear witness to the authenticity and truth of the Christian gospel, the sure gift of God's holiness to men."

When a person is canonized, certain honors are conferred upon that individual:

- 1) The name of the saint is listed among the other saints of the church and thus included in the liturgical calendar of the Church.
- 2) The name of the new saint is invoked in public prayers.
- 3) Churches are dedicated to God in the saint's memory.
- 4) Festive days are designated to celebrate his/her memory.



- 5) The name of the saint is mentioned in the Divine Liturgy on the day of the celebration of his/her memory and sometimes special hymns are sung to mention the virtuous deeds of the saint.
- 6) Pictorial or iconographical representations are made in which the saint is surrounded by a heavenly light of glory.
- 7) When available, the relics of the saint is enclosed in precious or decorated vessels and are publicly honored.

PRACTICAL, THEOLOGICAL & POLITICAL PROBLEMS OF CANONIZATION

The practical problem of canonizing the victims of the Armenian Genocide, or for that matter any person, stems from the fact that the Synod of Bishops of the Armenian Church, which has the authority to undertake such a task, has not consistently met. In fact, it has been over two decades that the Synod of the Armenian Church has not convened. The purpose and function of the Synod—the assembly of all bishops of the Armenian Church—is to regulate doctrines or disciplines in the Church. The decrees of the Synod are held to possess the highest authority which the Church can give. The Synod of the Armenian Church is summoned by the Catholicos and its decrees are confirmed by him. Obviously, the schism in the Armenian Church between Etchmiadzin and Antelias possess another problem. Will the Synod of each Catholicate meet separately or will a Synod of Bishops encompass the entire Armenian Church, both Etchmiadzin and Antelias? If it will be a Synod for the entire Church, the logistics of such a Synod still remain to be indefinite and ultimately, it might be dependent on the unity of the Armenian Church.

Furthermore, there is no set *method* or *formula* in the Armenian Church by which a person is determined to be a saint. The Armenian Church has not canonized any person for the past 500 years. The last person who was declared a saint was St. Gregory of Dagestani (1346-1410), who was an eminent theologian, teacher and an abbot, under whose instruction and training great leaders flourished in the Arme-

nian Church. (It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the implications of this 500 year gap in recognizing the true saints of the Armenian Church. Archbishop Shnorh Kalustian in his book *Armenian Saints* mentions over 25 individuals who should have been canonized, but are not so far recognized as saints).

The absence of a concrete methodology for canonization and the overwhelming task of documenting the lives and cases of the victims of the Genocide, virtually make it impossible to declare them saints in the proper sense of the term. For instance, in the Roman Catholic Church, the initial step of the process is a formal inquiry, instituted by the bishop of the diocese wherein the person lived. This inquiry is accomplished by a tribunal of three judges, a notary, and the "promoter of the faith," more commonly called the "devil's advocate." Following the report of the bishop to Rome, the Sacred Congregation opens the process, enlarging on the previous inquiries, with a promoter of the faith again presenting the flaws or weak points in the evidence. Only thereafter does the "apostolic process," as it is called, authorize further investigation and the long process of gathering evidence and determining the worthiness for beatification first, and then canonization. Again, for all practical purposes, we cannot canonize 1.5 million Armenians *en masse*, without documenting or knowing the ways and means of their martyrdom. Otherwise, their canonization would be exactly what it seems to be: bestowing them the ultimate honor and recognition without recognizing their true witness and worthiness for sainthood.

Theologically, once the victims of the

*Once the victims of the Genocide
are canonized... they are no longer
victims, but victors of Christ.*

Genocide are canonized, the Armenian Church will be put under a dogmatic imperative, i.e. they are no longer victims, but victors of Christ. Once the victims of the Genocide are canonized, we can no longer hold *Hokehankists* (requiem services) to mourn their death, to which we have accustomed ourselves. Instead, we will celebrate the Divine Liturgy invoking their names, asking for their intercession and celebrate their

victory over death, in and through Christ. Once the victims of the Genocide are canonized, we can no longer hold candle light vigils. The mournful, dark atmosphere of commemorations of the Genocide will have to be changed into a "festive" glorious atmosphere. The victims are no longer victims, but saints who live in the glory of God, i.e. those who have joined God in an endless sharing of a divine life beyond all corruption and have found the *true* life with God. Hence, the question is whether Armenians are willing to see themselves as witness to the Death and Resurrection of Christ—for whom hundreds of thousands of Armenians gave their lives—rather than perpetually identify themselves as the victim.

Politically, ever since the 50th anniversary of the Genocide, Armenians have collectively demanding justice for the 1.5 million victims of the Genocide from the Turks in particular and the world in general. Canonization would *de facto* resolve the problem of justice. It would be preposterous to demand justice for saints any longer. Canonization might be detrimental to the political agenda of the Armenian political mechanism. It would mean "let's forgive and forget" and engage in a "dialogue" with a new perspective. Furthermore, the territorial question with Turkey might also be complicated. As it is customary with saints, does it mean that the places where Armenians were martyred would be considered shrines or an Armenian "holy land." Still, there are many indirect political implications which need to be carefully examined.

The proposal of the two Catholicos to canonize the victims of the Genocide should be examined in light of the problems surrounding the issue. Since the details of their proposal are not available or so far have not been public and based on the state of events in the Armenian Church, the proposal seems to serve as an added "glitter" to the observance of the 75th anniversary of the Genocide. Seventy five years have passed and the world seems to "ignore" the victims of the Genocide, thus, in our frustration, the ultimate honor that we can render our victims is to declare them as saints. We would do injustice to our victims if we canonize them without recognizing their martyrdom for Christ and its impact on our lives individually and on our nation collectively. The saints are canonized primarily for the faithful. Declaring the victims as saints is not rewarding them the



"medal of honor," but it is to follow their example in obtaining the "heavenly crown of glory." It is to perpetuate their witness to Christ through our own mission and evangelism in this world.

Banquet!

*Christ invites you to His Banquet -
Badarak*

This Sunday at your local Armenian Church



GUROLIAN, continued from page 7

those living and all those who follow in the future. For whatever meaning their deaths have is located in that faith in the Crucified and Resurrected One of whom they themselves testified through their very dying. That is what martyrdom means after all. It means to witness. "Some were mocked and whipped, and others were tied up and put in prison. They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they were killed with the sword. They went around clothed in skins of sheep or goats, poor, persecuted and mistreated. The world was not good enough for them! They wandered like refugees in the deserts and hills, living in caves and holes in the ground" (Hebrews 11:36-38 TEV). The world has not changed very much in two thousand years. These words were written by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews in recollection of the witness born to God's redemption by the patriarchs, prophets and the faithful throughout history until the coming of Christ. But he goes on to exclaim, "What a record all these men have won by their faith! Yet they did not receive what God had promised, because God had decided on an ever better plan for us. His purpose was that only in company with us would they be made perfect" (Hebrews 11:39-40 TEV).

Here is the meaning and the purpose of the commemoration of the deaths of the million and one half, not to praise man but to praise God and strive with renewed conviction to be followers of Him in whom the martyrs and all the faithful who have journeyed before us—indeed in whom all of creation—rejoice.

"His purpose was that only in company with us would they be made perfect," wrote the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. These ought to be sobering words. This is the seriousness of God's calling. This is the magnitude of an enduring reason for our remembering. Armenians must perpetually call up the memory of these martyrs before God, making the martyrs' sacrifice their own, joining them before the throne of God, heirs together of God's eternal Kingdom. For, as the same author continues, "[We] have this large crowd of witnesses around us. So then, let us, therefore rid ourselves of everything that gets in the way, and the sin which holds to us so tightly, and let us run with determination the race that lies before us. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom

our faith depends from beginning to end. He did not give up His cross! On the contrary, because of the joy awaiting Him, he thought nothing of the disgrace of dying on the cross, and is now seated at the right side of God's throne" (Hebrews 12:1-2 TEV).

"Maybe," said the lady, "God means for us . . . to have a special purpose." We have hardly begun to discern that purpose. The immediate concern of Armenians after the Ottoman Turk struck his awful blow at them was to find a way to survive, to nurture the orphaned nation in all the strange new lands into which its members had been exiled. Then in 1965 with the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Genocide, a new consciousness began to emerge. Armenians found the will and the way to voice the anger, the outrage and the pain of what had happened to them, to their parents and grandparents. This served its purpose. In its best light this activity raised the consciousness of Armenians to the significance of the Genocide for them and for other people. It was the first Genocide of this century, the awful predecessor of the Holocaust and all the human slaughter and state inflicted mass murder which is the mark of this century. These lessons served as the foundation upon which the seventieth and seventy-fifth commemorations were built. But such remembrance has also given rise to a habitual harping and lamentation, to a destructive self pity, guilt and defensiveness and an uncontrollable rage. Armenians have been frustrated, at times frenzied and in all too many instances unable to make creative use of their experiences.

Beyond the often rehearsed secular and political significance and uses of the Armenian experience, there is a spiritual service Armenians can render. I have not intended to dimin-

...the full measure of the meaning which the Genocide must obtain for Armenians... is the necessary condition that Armenians witness to the faith which makes the martyrs alive with God.

ish the importance and nobility of those secular and political causes served by the remembrance of the Armenocide. For some such remembrance has meant waging the argument for restoration of the Armenian historic land and independent nationhood; for others it has been the occasion for pressuring Turkey to admit finally that indeed a genocide was perpe-

trated and Ottoman Turkey was responsible; for others it has meant the opportunity to add the voice of Armenians to the universal plea for human rights and the prevention of genocide. I have been a participant in such causes. I always have believed, however, that the full

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measure of the meaning which the Genocide must obtain for Armenians in order to translate the deaths of the one and one half million into the fullness of life for themselves and for their posterity is not comprehended in any one or even all of these causes. Beyond these causes is the necessary condition that Armenians witness to the faith which makes the martyrs alive with God.

There is no meaning in the senseless slaughter of a million and one half people aside from the certain knowledge that Jesus Christ by his own death and resurrection has conquered death and all its forces in this world. History, particularly as it bears the mark of fratricide, provides no meaning for itself. It stands in need of the redemption which is in Jesus Christ. Christ is risen and so are the Armenian martyrs. Yet like the disciples who, when first confronted with the awful truth of the crucifixion of their Lord and by his presence in His spiritual body did not recognize him, Armenians have been incapable of recognizing that the resurrected life is theirs. Why do I say this? Because if Armenians had recognized this the churches would be full. Armenians in the diaspora would not have let go of a whole generation of their own, my generation and now its children, who are so conspicuously absent from the pews of all the parishes in America whether those of the Diocesan or the Prelacy. The true lasting service to all the victims and martyrs of 1915 will be when Armenians rededicate themselves to the evangelization of all those whom they have left stray and build up the Body of Christ with the same earnest exhilaration of the first disciples and saints of the Church. In such service God surely will reveal His purpose, replacing the pain of remembrance with the joy of his presence.

Dr. Guroian is Associate Professor of Theology and Ethics at Loyola College in Maryland and visiting lecturer at St. Nersess Armenian Seminary. He has published numerous articles in scholarly and religious journals and is the author of Incarnate Love: Essays in Orthodox Ethics (Notre Dame Press, 1987).



STATEMENT

ARMENIAN CHURCH TREASURERS:

“Proven Profit Potential!”

It rarely surprises us to learn that our Armenian Church treasurers have left the non-Armenian observer in awe. Such art, as inspired only by God, has filled the pages of manuscripts and today are indeed our “treasures.”

It was therefore alarming to receive in the mail a solicitation to buy pages of a rare Armenian manuscript. It was truly appalling to read the literature regarding this “proven profit potential.” It is even more appalling to witness the silence of our Church heirarchs as Armenian Express (U.S.A.) Inc. rips the pages of a heavenly treasure in search of temporal riches.

The manuscript in question is a 400 year-old hand crafted volume, “The Lives of the Saints.” It is billed as “somehow survived over centuries of war, famine, earthquakes, plagues and strife.” Surely it will not survive man’s greed. The author of the solicitation, Setrak Kalpakian, admits, “Nearly all Armenian manuscripts as old as this are preserved in the archives of Armenian churches,” yet he appeals to our weakness to profit by offering an unconditional lifetime guarantee on the \$800 per page offer.

We do not question the economics or the alternatives of such an endeavor. Surely if this collector’s item had fallen into other hands we may have never known of its fate. Nonetheless, it is in Armenian hands. There is a question of ethics which supercedes our primordial desire to “make a buck.” The Church heirarchs in their silence have done nothing short of condoning this entrepreneur’s dream.

The A.C.R.A. Group with an earnest desire to study and present the faith of our forefathers to the Armenians takes exception to this silence and calls on readers of *Window* to voice their opinion. Carriers of the Armenian Express credit card may send their torn/cancelled credit cards to Setrak Kalpakian, Chairman, c/o Armenian Express (U.S.A.), Inc. or write to International Rarities Group, 4300 Montgomery Ave., Bethesda, Maryland, 20814 or call toll free 1-800-877-1726.

As all icons, our manuscripts are windows through which we see God. How can we ever place a price tag on this luxury?
—The Group

Armenian culture was pre-eminently ecclesiastical. Its literature did include chronicles and secular poems, but was overwhelmingly religious as a whole. Armenian manuscripts, famous alike for their antiquity, their beauty, and their importance in the history of writing, are nearly all ecclesiastical. Most interesting of all in many ways (especially for the comparison of texts and variant readings) are the numerous copies of the Gospel. ... Other important writings were dogmatic works, commentaries, and sharakans or sacred songs composed in honor of church festivals. Armenian art, again, was mainly ecclesiastical, and survives, on the one hand in the illuminations and miniatures which adorn the sacred texts, and, on the other, in the ruined churches and convents which still cover the face of the country. Architecture was military as well as ecclesiastical, but it is hard not to believe that the people of Ani were prouder of their galaxy of churches than they were of their fortresses, their walls, and their towers. — J.B. Bury, History of the Later Roman Empire, Vol. II, London, 1889.

Other sheets were decorated with beautiful birds; still others with multi-colored symbols and often-brilliant designs.



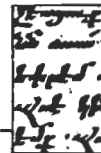
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After the illustrator completed his work, solid gold leaf was added to a precious few of the most important sheets. This process, involving melting solid gold and applying it with camel hair to the sheets, is so complicated to describe here. But you can imagine how difficult and time-consuming it would be.

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The reaction of experts who have seen these sheets can be summed up in one word: Spectacular!



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TRANSITIONS

ELECTED: VERY REV. FR. KHAJAG BARSAMIAN was elected Primate of Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America in May 1990, at the Annual Diocesan Assembly in Worcester, MA. Fr. Khajag is a member of the Brotherhood of Jerusalem. He was ordained a celibate priest in 1971. He was the Vicar General of the Eastern Diocese prior to his election. He succeeded Archbishop Torkom Manoogian (presently the Patriarch of Jerusalem), who was the Primate from 1967-1990.

ELECTED: VERY REV. FR. HOVNAN DERDERIAN was elected Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of Canada in May 1990. He succeeded the late Archbishop Vazken Keshishlian. Fr. Hovnan is a member of the Brotherhood of Etchmiadzin. He was ordained a celibate priest by His Holiness Catholicos Vazken I, in 1980.



DUNLAP, CALIFORNIA— Window editors lead retreat for Church workers.

ARMENIAN CHURCH RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS GROUP

The A.C.R.A. GROUP was founded in 1989 by a group of clergy and lay servants of the Armenian Church. In view of the recent developments in the world and particularly in Armenia, the need for a professional and innovative approach to the matters facing the Armenian people in general and the Armenian Church in particular was strongly felt by individuals, who are committed to the Traditions of the Church and share the vision of St. Gregory the Illuminator. The aims of the GROUP are: Through research and observations, highlight the role of the Armenian Church in the life of the Armenian people; To provide a forum for dialogue and discussion on matters concerning the Church today; To provide publications that would further contribute to the growth of the Armenian community in the Faith of their forefathers; To feel the gap between the National and Religious characteristics of the Armenian Community.

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS WANTED

As part of the GROUP's expanding scope and service there will be an opening for a Director of Operations at the Group headquarters in 1991. The director will function directly under the Group advisory board and will be responsible for development of specified programs. Fluency in Armenian, English and computer skills are mandatory. Send resumé to GROUP, 17808 Sherman Way, Suite #315, Reseda, CA 91335.



LETTERS TO THE GROUP

With great satisfaction I read your last issue of *Window* and am quite delighted that the Armenian Church has finally produced an informative, high caliber periodical addressing contemporary issues and life's problems. The Armenian Church and her clergymen have come of age.

Through such literary form as you most appropriately named *Window*, we can now read about the seeds of Our Faith, her Catechesis, teaching, theology and Orthodox doctrine that have remained for too long dormant in the storage bins and shelves of libraries, schools and institutions. You indeed have begun to help us all re-read our church as we begin to enter a new century.

Thank you for your vision and we pray for your continued success that your work shed greater beams of light that will penetrate the windows of our hearts.

—Fr. Garabed Kochakian, Racine, Wisconsin

Thank you for clearing the "stained glass" so that we may clearly look into our Church, her beautiful teachings and traditions of centuries old.

Window is an exceptional piece of literature which should be in every Armenian home, without a doubt. God bless you all. Keep up the good work.

—Ani Janoyan, Glendale, CA

We have set the copies of *Window*, no. 2, in our Armenian Book Clearing House Display and Sales room, and visitors have been taking them and making very favorable comments.

—Sandra L. Jurigian,

Administrative Director, NAASR, Belmont, MA

I truly enjoyed reading your publication. You can play a major role in our community by publishing thought provoking—even controversial articles.

Thank you.

—Louise Simone, New York, NY

I received a copy of *Window* and I am extremely ecstatic. The Armenian Church in America now has a true legitimate publication of which we can be proud. Now we can place a magazine next to any of the Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant magazines and not feel inferior. This work is as close to scholarly standards as any of our publications have come.

As a well known Armenian revolutionary leader, Mgrdich Portukalian once said, while in America in 1888, "Whenever an Armenian has gone he has taken with him his church, his press and his school. Without these three integral forces, he cannot preserve his identity."

What you are writing is not only teaching us, but preserving our all important traditions and identity. May God continue to help you strive towards your goals.

—Gary Alexander, Cambridge, MA

I congratulate you on your efforts in publishing *Window*. The challenge is to present insights about God, the Church and life with practical applications in a way that motivates the readers to live what we believe.

I wish you much success with *Window*, your individual ministries and your other activities.

—Dean Shahinian, Alexandria, VA

ON LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Issue No. 2 of *Window*, "In Search of an Armenian Liberation Theology," brought mixed reaction from our readers:



Thank you for sending me the first two issues of *Window*. I enclose a copy of the March (1990) issue of the *World* magazine in which I have published an article (part of a larger study) trying to convey Armenia's theology of survival. The term "theology of liberation" (*Window*, Spring '90) is not applicable to our experience. All the events of

Armenian Church history indicate that the role of our theology was to secure the religious, spiritual survival of our nation in whatever political situation he found himself and in whatever environment he found himself.

—Rev. Dr. Vrej Nersessian, London

I very much appreciated the article "Toward a Diaspora Theology" (Spring 90). As the daughter of a father and maternal grandfather who came from the village of Kurd Belen, our side of the family was persecuted for being more Christian than Armenian....

We need more of this kind of evaluation. We were always made to feel so bad if we did.

—Ruth Arzoumanian Schissler, Jamaica Plain, MA

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