

wind o w

view of the Armenian Church



"HELPING ARMENIA
IN RECONSTRUCTION
AND RENEWAL"

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WINDOW *view of the Armenian Church*

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compiled by Hratch Tchilingirian

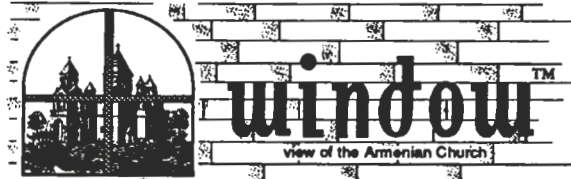
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As for those who say...

Fr. Vazken Movsesian

"I am amazed that you are so readily turning away from Him who called you by the grace of Christ, to another gospel, which is really not another; except that some are troubling you and want to distort the good news concerning Christ." -Gal. 1:6-7

It has been said that more wars have been fought for the sake of religion than for any other reason. It is a tragic observation, yet painfully truthful. Examples of our intolerance for one another not only fill the pages of history books, but also newspapers reporting Islamic fanaticism in the Middle East, Arian bigotry in the South and fundamentalist censorship among the religious right.

It is tragic that we have so much hatred and disagreement toward one another when discussing a God of love. In large part, that disagreement has stemmed from our understanding of the Creator. The focus of this issue of *Window*, may seem to be an attempt to discredit another person's value system and faith, nevertheless, as workers of the Armenian Church—with a calling to spread Christ's Gospel — we have compiled these pages as a defense against the rapidly spreading distortion of our Faith.

During the past seventeen centuries the Armenian Church has been the primary religious expression among Armenians. Today, however, the Armenian Church is only one option among an ever in-

creasing number of religions and philosophies that are vying for the Armenian soul.

For 70 years, communism has pounded the Armenian Church in Armenia. It has laxed the embrace of the Church and her children. Despite this constant beating—at times, crushing—the Armenian Church has kept her head up and avoided the ten count. Now with the ties of socialism loosening, the Armenian Church may be in for the greatest battle she has faced in Her history of seventeen centuries. The battle is not against a system which has viewed Her as the "opiate of the people," but against mind and spirit altering forces. These advisories are the alternate religions penetrating Armenia, which we call, for a lack of a better term, "cults."

In Armenia, communism has diminished the priority of the Church in the lives of the people. The State was supposed to function as moral and ethical guardian. Where the Church was unable to provide direction, the humanistic philosophies inherent in Marxist doctrine became the grounds for "ethics and morality." Now, as the democratic reforms unfold, it is apparent that the people have been starving on the Soviet diet of idealism.

The Armenian Church in Armenia is beginning to enjoy a renaissance. Local parishes are filled to capacity at their regular worship. Government officials openly practice their faith. Prayers of the Church are recited in government schools.

The Catholicos is asked to bless Parliament meetings and members of the central government partake in the Eucharist.

Christ's statement, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few," is currently echoed in Armenia with an air of urgency. However, the Church is no longer the sole proprietor of the field. Other religions are also interested in reaping the harvest. They have begun their missionary work, sending ministers and printed material into the once-exclusive domain of the Armenian Church. The deep psychological wounds caused by the 1988 earthquake has opened avenues for cults to enter under false pretences. The Hare Krishnas, the Mormons, Jehovah's Witness, have set up camp in Armenia and winning converts into their tents.

St. Augustine wrote, "Unity in essentials, liberty in non-essentials and charity in all things." The Church is tolerant of other Christian denominations, provided the Divinity of Christ is confessed. In the early Church, heretics were clearly identified, denounced and condemned. Christology was the ruler by which doctrine was measured. To this day, during the service of the calling to the priesthood, the candidate for ordination publicly anathematizes the heretics of the first five centuries. (See list on p. 14 for early Church heretics.) The number of heretics has steadily increased but the Church has not updated the list by formally anathematizing latter day heretics. Most

of the early heretics do not have followers today. Ironically, if they were not mentioned by the Church, the heretics would have long since been forgotten. Nevertheless, their heresies, under different title, are very much alive today.

"There is a way which seems right to a person, but its end is the way of death." —Proverbs 14:12

In a cults primer (p. 5), Dn. Odabashian differentiates between cults and "destructive" cults. These classifications are important when we consider the grave consequences which befell members of the People's Temple or followers of Charles Manson. However, most cults are not so overt in their destructive characteristics. Unfortunately, these are the ones with the broadest appeal and pose the greatest threats to

the children of the Church. These are the subtle cults, often hiding under the guise of a philosophy and/or a pop-psychology, nevertheless with all the classic marks and sting of a cult.

In discussing cults, we have two concerns before us. First is the appeal, the drawing power of the cult. Studies remind us that a vast majority of people are drawn to cults not for reasons of any divine revelations nor doctrinal gratification. Rather, cults offer a sense of community in an otherwise private and compartmentalized world. This in fact is a strong drawing magnet and a cornerstone of organized religion. The actual needs of the people—the congregation—are being met.

Whatever the reasons for joining a cult, be it to deal with loneliness or for the appeal of the theology, we have to concede one

point: it "works" for that individual. In so doing, it is supplying that person with a value system and a set of moral imperatives. Which brings us to the greater concern, theology.

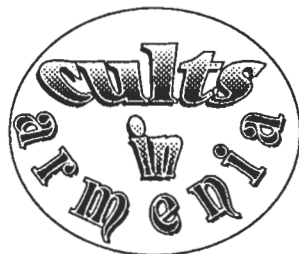
As for those who say there was a time when the Son was not or there was a time when the Holy Spirit was not or that they came into being out of nothing or who say that the Son of God or the Holy Spirit are of a different substance and that they are changeable or alterable, such the catholic and apostolic holy Church does anathematize. — Anathema of the Nicene Creed.

It is obvious, there is no latitude when discussing christology. The basis of our faith is the confession of Jesus Christ as God and one of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. We confess the indivisible Godhead in our prayers and creeds. However, we have fallen short in the witness of our Faith, while the cults have been successful in propagating their creed. Our faith provides values and morals, strength and support, love and forgiveness. In fact, it "works" for us! Its message is more powerful than that of any cult, because Christ's message is one of salvation in the here and now as well as in the world to come. The rich theology of the Armenian Church is only in need of "promotion."

The ability of a cult to attract and convert from the fold of the Church, is an indictment on the Church. (See interview with Armenian Hare Krishna, p. 21.) It means that the Church is unable to provide for the needs of its faithful. This is the challenge before every member of the Armenian Church. We have the Faith, we have the love of Christ, we have God. It is only through our witness that we propagate this Faith.

We trust that the pages of this *Window* will provide our readers with the necessary information about cults and their activity among Armenians. Let us keep in mind that the cults will do what we neglect! They will extend where we cannot reach! They will be heard where our voice is silent...





What is a CULT?

Dn. Norman Odabashian

Before the time of Christ and even earlier, cults have existed and have had great followings. Every race and every social class has produced cults. The phenomenon is universal. Actually a cult is nothing more than a group of people or a community which holds the same beliefs. Usually they are centered around a common leader. In the pagan Roman Empire of the first and second centuries, the Christian religion was considered a cult. Christianity certainly fits the definition of a cult as stated above.

However, in more recent times and within our culture there has been a drastic increase in what would best be called "destructive cults." In this article we shall show just how destructive these modern day cults can be. Orthodox Christianity must become aware of the great danger and being thus informed must challenge the cults in defense of the true and freeing Gospel.

On November 18, 1978 a shocking mass cult suicide took place in Jonestown. Over nine hundred people committed suicide as a result of imbibing a drink which their leader had poisoned. Over night the whole world was awakened to the danger of the cults. For a time the issue of the cults was on the front pages and uppermost topic of discussions in high schools and colleges. As time passed the novelty wore off and the topic slowly declined in interest. (Just a few weeks ago a lonely article appeared in the middle of a national newspaper reporting a cult related death.) Nevertheless, it must be stated that

cults have not gone away, they continue their destructive activities and each day scores and scores of young people are trapped into the various groups.

Perhaps this is one of the prices that we must pay for living in a pluralistic and permissive society, where we enjoy freedom of worship. But we must draw the line and take a strong stand against destructive religious groups. Because of our tolerance toward religious groups of every kind, the cults are left unchallenged and in some degree are encouraged by society's complacency. No one seems to become interested unless a loved one is at stake. So as a result, cults are actually on the increase throughout the world while at the same time many mainline Christian groups are struggling to retain members.

What is it that makes the cults so appealing and at the same time so destructive? Cults offer an escape from the chaos and confusion of modern life. They promise to give answers to the meaning of life and death. On the other hand, people who have left cults testify to extreme physical mental and emotional abuse. Mind manifestation and thought reform (brainwashing) are often used to convince new followers. In addition, many cults have been found guilty of such illegal practices as consumer fraud, forced servitude and physical threat to non-members.

The truly destructive nature of these cults is best seen in the drastic change or emotional shifts which occur in the lives of people drawn into cults. Many have had a total

turn about in their vocational directions or goals. Others have unexpectedly broken off long term relationships, including family ties. Cults often make super human demands on adherents, which cause them to sacrifice family and career in order to devote themselves fully to the cult—be it raising money, winning new converts or being a slave to the leader.

There are five basic categories of cults. The first, the classical American cults, have all come into existence in the course of the nineteenth century, among which are the Mormons, Christian Scientists and Jehovah's Witnesses. All of the groups have vast and sophisticated publishing networks on an international scale and enjoy very large followings.

Another type of cult which came about in the late 1950's can be called the *pseudo-christian* cult, because they have come out of recognized Christian denominations and their leaders have at one time been duly recognized Christian ministers. A few of these are the Children of God, the Way International and the Moonies, otherwise known as the Unification Church.

The most exotic types of cults come out of the East and in more cases than not have their roots in some branch of Hinduism. A few of them are the Hare Krishnas, the followers of Rajneesh and Transcendental Meditation. In these cults above all the focus is on escape from reality and becoming one with the leader or the all important guru. Sexual promiscuity is often encouraged as well.

Humanistic psychology which

deals with the development of human potential with or without God can be considered a fourth type of cult (e.g. the new age movement). This has become very popular in our society in recent years, as book after book is published and as more programs are offer in cities throughout America.

A fifth type of cult which is wrought with danger involves activity with the occult. This is nothing more than a regression to the pre-christian worship of nature, the forces behind nature and Satan-worship. This regression into paganism and introduction of pantheism is accompanied by strange sacrificial activity, sometimes involving human sacrifices.

The Christian Church must test and evaluate all such new groups on the basis of its own standard of truth, based upon the Scriptures and the Holy Tradition. Christians have to be better instructed and grounded in their own faith, so that their needs will be met by the saving Christian faith. Knowledge is the best deterrent to the spread of the cults. We need to ask what the cults teach about the person of Christ. Is His divinity being acknowledged? How does the group view the Holy Spirit and the scriptures? We must beware when other books written in latter days, by supposedly inspired persons are viewed on an equal or higher plain than the Bible.

It is also important to investigate the history of a particular group. Does it have a solid foundation in centuries of practice? Does it compare to the Church which has lasted since apostolic times and which has above all stressed the freedom of the believer and the sanctity of the family. Or did its leader just arrive on the last boat from India, or was he just released from a prison sentence for tax evasion or drug abuse? The behavior of the group must be fully investigated to see whether or not it enters into the realm of the bizarre which may include the practice of human sacrifice or cult prostitution.

When we attempt to identify

dangerous cults, it is crucial that we are aware of the general characteristics of cults and their adherents. First there is usually an aversion to non-members and especially toward Christians. Non-members are viewed as spiritually inferior. Usually, there is almost always a requirement of blind obedience to a

Cults offer an escape from the chaos and confusion of modern life. They promise to give answers to the meaning of life and death.

leader, no matter how evil or corrupt that leader may be.

The concept of forgiveness is not very often stressed and in fact many deny the notion of full forgiveness for committed offenses. Cults take advantage of guilt in order to impress followers toward full dependence. The use of threats are often physical in nature and often constitute routine methods of dealing with disobedience or dissension. For example, there have been proven cases of physical violence among the Mormons and the followers of the sex-guru Rajneesh.

Though there exist over a hundred different cults, certain ideas are commonly shared among them. Each cult, for example, claims to have the monopoly on truth and right thinking and believing. However, even a superficial view of them will show that most are syncretistic, holding beliefs which are borrowed from already existing religious systems. Modern cults very often borrow ideas from each other. For instance, the Christian Scientist's denial of the existence of matter has been in one way or another influenced by Hindu philosophy. In fact, all of the gurus which make their way into our society, simply repeat in a variety of ways the themes developed thousands of years ago. The dogma espoused by a leader is usu-

ally subjective in nature and is often based on feelings, rather than on wisdom or study. No one in the group has the right to question the leader's view, but must maintain absolute obedience.

Followers of cults very often are made to be persecution conscious. If people cause them difficulty or challenge them in any way, they feel that they are being "persecuted for righteousness sake" and thus the truth of the cause is further impressed upon them. Furthermore, many cults are characterized by esoteric activities and a fascination with secrets held by the adherents. Only to members are the secrets of the cult ever divulged and a threat of sever punishment is made to anyone who gives away secret knowl-

edge.

The place of the leader cannot be overly emphasized. For the cult members, the leader is all powerful and infallible. People in cults blindly give away all their worldly possessions and turn over all financial assets to the cult leader. Glory upon glory is rendered to the guru. He enjoys the grand luxury in numerous mansions throughout the world. He partakes of the fullest of what wealth can provide, while his devotees go about begging and scraping for food, having barely enough clothing to keep warm.

How and in what ways do cults gain control over people. Mind control or brainwashing is at the top of the list. Cults will control the total social environment of the inductee, including how their time is spent and as to what they are allowed to see, read and eat. Inductees are often drugged against their will, denied sleep and are forced to repeat meaningless phrases for hours on end. People are forced to believe that they are helpless and that their lives are devoid of meaning outside of the cult community. All support systems, except for the cult are removed, including parents and friends. Furthermore, people are reduced to childishness and are forced to be dependent on the cult community. In short, all former

behavior associated with family, friends and job are replaced with the cult as the new family. The leader becomes a father figure, but is always characterized as friendly, yet in reality is deceptive. His authority is unchallengeable and any discussion or question of policy is not permitted.

In order to further the goal of the cult to totally take over the person's being, spiritual experiences are artificially brought about. Constant chanting and hyperventilation, increased stress levels, deprivation of sleep, a decrease of protein in the diet, hypnosis and drug use all contribute to bringing about dependency of the individual upon the cult and its leader.

Finally, it would be helpful to realize what kind of people are falling into the snare of cults. Studies indicate that they are mostly teens and young adults from ages 17-24. Often they are college students from

good homes, who perhaps experience some loneliness being away from home for the first time. Such people are perfect candidates who fall very easily into cults, where they are welcomed into an environment of love and affection. They are at an age when all of a sudden pressures surround them, from home, school and peers. The cults are extremely enticing for those who have simply not found answers in traditional religious circles to the serious problems confronting young and old alike in the rapidly changing and contradiction filled world of today.

The study of the cults is as important as it is vast, because of the variety of cults which exist and of the serious threat they pose to people throughout the world. Cults are not only a threat to the Church, but moreover pose a severe danger to society. From a Christian standpoint they are agents of evil, because of the hold that they take

upon people. Cults take away from innocent people their ability to make choices and to retain and develop relationships, which comprises the meaning and function of being human, made "in the image and likeness of God."



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cult:

n. [Fr. *culite*, L. *cultus*, from *colere*, to cultivate, worship.]

1. worship; reverential honor; religious devotion. [Obs.]
2. the system of outward forms and ceremonies used in worship; religious rites and formalities.
3. devoted attachment to, or extravagant admiration for, a person, principle, etc., especially when regarded as a fad.

occult:

a. [L. *occultus*, concealed, pp. of *occulere*, to cover over; *ob*, over, and root seen in *celare*, to conceal.]

1. hidden; concealed.
2. secret; esoteric.
3. beyond human understanding; mysterious.
4. designating or of certain mystic arts or studies, such as magic, alchemy, astrology, etc.

sect:

n. [ME *secte*, Fr. MF & LL & L; MF, group, sect, Fr. LL *secta* organized ecclesiastical body, f. L, way of life, class of person.]

1. a dissenting or schismatic religious body; *esp* :one regarded as extreme or heretical.
2. a religious denomination.
3. a group adhering to a distinctive doctrine or a leader.
4. FACTION.

COERCIVE CULT TECHNIQUES

ABSOLUTE LOYALTY	Allegiance to the sect is demanded and enforced by actual or veiled threats to one's body or eternal spiritual condition.
ALTERED DIET	Depriving one of essential nutrients and enforcing a low-protein diet can lead to disorientation and emotional susceptibility.
CHANTING AND MEDITATION	Objective intellectual input is avoided by countering anticult questions with repetitious songs and chants.
CONFORMITY	Dress, language, names, and interests take on a sameness which erodes individuality.
DOCTRINAL CONFUSION	Incomprehensible, "truths" are more readily accepted when presented in a complex fashion which encourages rejection of logical thought.
EXCLUSIVITY	Those outside the cult are viewed as spiritually inferior, creating an exclusive attitude of the self-righteous "we" versus "they" mentality.
FINANCIAL INVOLVEMENT	All or part of one's personal assets may be donated to the cult, increasing a vested interest in sticking-with-it and lessening the chance of returning to a former vocation.
HYPNOTIC STATES	Inducing a highly susceptible state of mind may be accomplished by chanting repetitious singing, or meditation.
ISOLATION FROM OUTSIDE	Diminished perception of reality results when one is physically separated from friends, society and the rational frame of reference in which one has previously functioned.
LACK OF PRIVACY	Reflective, critical thinking is impossible in a setting where cult members are seldom left unattended.
LOVE BOMBING	Physical affection and constant contrived attention can give a false sense of camaraderie.
MEGA-COMMUNICATIONS	Long, confusing lectures can be an effective tool if the inductee is bombarded with glib rhetoric and catch phrases.
NEW RELATIONSHIPS	Marriage to another cult members and the destruction of past family relationships integrates one fully into the cult "family."
NONSENSICAL ACTIVITIES	Games and other activities with no apparent purpose leave one dependent upon a group or leader to give direction and order.
PAVLOVIAN CONTROL	Behavior modification by alternating reward and punishment leads to confusion and dependency.
PEER PRESSURE	By exploiting one's desire for acceptance, doubts about cult practices can be overcome by offering a sense of belonging to an affirming community.
SENSORY DEPRIVATION	Fatigue coupled with prolonged activity can make one vulnerable to otherwise offensive beliefs and suggestions.
SURRENDERED PRIVACY	The ego's normal emotional defensive mechanisms can easily be stripped away by having the new member share personal secrets which can later be used for intimidation.
UNQUESTIONING	Acceptance of cult practices is achieved by discouraging any questioning or natural curiosity which may challenge what the leader propagate.
VALUE REJECTION	As the recruit becomes more integrated into the cult, he is encouraged to denounce the values and beliefs of his former life.



SECTS in Armenian History

Rev. Dr. Nerses V. Nersessian

Heresy is as old as Christianity. The Greek word *haerests* can be found not only in historian Herodotus (5th century B.C.), but also in Thucydides (*History of the Peloponnesian War*), and in both texts it signifies 'an act of taking'. In the first century B.C., when Greek culture became fashionable in the Roman world, the word had come to mean 'a choice'. In the new environment of Rome, Cicero (106-43 B.C.), Rome's greatest orator, endowed the word with a new meaning. It no longer meant merely 'a choice', but rather 'a sect' or 'a school of thought'. Thus it is not surprising that the term *haerests* acquired among the early Christians a distinctive meaning. For them it served to distinguish the other religious groups found on the Mediterranean littoral from what they, as faithful followers of Christ, regarded as the one true religion - the New Testament 'good news'. In their vocabulary, 'heresy' was any doctrine, whether within or outside the Christian community.

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which was evidently irreconcilable with Christianity. The teachings of both the Sadducees and the Pharisees is qualified in the New Testament as *haerests*, in contexts which involve opposition to the apostles. The early Christian attitude to *haerests* was also at variance. St. Paul seems to be counselling moderation in such doctrinal disputes and temporary indecision on some points when he advises the Corinthians: 'There must be factions (heresies) among you, in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized'. But this pronouncement has a sequel in another Pauline Epistle, that to Titus, which shows the apostolic Church in a less conciliatory mood: "As for a man who is factious (heretical), after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is perverted and sinful; he is self-condemned," (3:10).

Initially the principle of *consensus ecclesias* was fully endorsed by the Roman state. But the temper of the church changed with the times. In the trinitarian and christological disputes, formal anathemas were pronounced in ecumenical synods against false or reputed false doctrines; in the same centuries the papacy launched the darts and barbs of excommunication against the Donatists and all who agreed with their views. The crisis presented by the Arian heresy, initiated a progressive sharpening of the Christian

concept of heresy. Arianism openly invaded Christian theology, inaugurating a mode of attack that was to become more and more common for heresy in subsequent centuries, particularly where civilization had enabled some degree of theological education to penetrate the lower social levels. Arianism forced the Church to take more strenuous measures to clarify doctrine and protect orthodoxy. These necessities led to the involvement of the state in the definition and proscription of beliefs. The conversion of Constantine, early in the fourth century added a new element. The concern for the unity of the Church in doctrine and organization brought the emperor into Church matters, and established a bond between Church and state and thus imposed a duty on Christians to remain united for the good of the state. Thus the Council of Arles of 314, in which the Donatist heresy was condemned officially, was held to secure a condemnation which was in the interest of both Church and state in that it strove to ensure the civil and religious peace of the Roman Empire. And the Council of Nicaea, summoned to deal with the Arian heresy in 325, was presided over by Constantine himself, and at his urging it strove mightily to reach a solution that would ensure peace in Egypt and the East. This meant that the Church was being drawn into the orbit of the state and assuming obligations that pertained to the

state. Not without reason did early heresies and opponents of the Church contend that from the days of Constantine the body of the Church had been poisoned. Later emperors sought to make the Church their servant and their agent in a politic compromise with Arian doctrines. After this episode, the leaders of the Church realized that, in a state whose duty it was to protect the true belief, heresy could not be tolerated. The Christological heresies of the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries (Nestorian, Monophysite, and Monothelite doctrines) were accordingly marked by a growth in the Church's disciplinary apparatus to deal with opposition, and made heresy the active concern of an increasingly powerful papacy. After the Council of Chalcedon in 451 the emperors again sought to use the Church to enforce their favorite doctrine or some irenic compromise.

It is in the context of this introduction that I would like to look at the role of the sects in Armenian church history and the church's attitude towards sectarians throughout most of its history. The origin of Christianity in Armenia has always been a matter of acute controversy. This is not surprising for there was no literature in the Armenian language during the first four centuries and therefore we have no contemporary written document concerning the beginning of Christianity in Armenia. All the sources on the conversion date from the fifth century. What is relevant to our purpose is that the rapid advance of the Christian faith in the second and third centuries paved the way for national acceptance of Christianity as the official religion at the end of the third (A.D. 287 or 289) or the beginning of the fourth century (A.D. 314). The streams of Christian influence - the 'Greek-type' from the north western borders and the 'Syrian-type' from the south western borders - filtered into Armenia and at first continued to coexist side by side all through the fourth century. In addition paganism persisted long after the adherence of Armenia to

Christianity. The centuries old institutions and traditions of Zoroastrians and Mazdeism could not be eradicated overnight by a royal decree or by anti-pagan measures taken by the State.

In the account of Agathangeghos on the conversion of Armenia to Christianity, there is clear tendency to reduce the importance of the previous religion and to make the "conversion" appear total and sudden break with the ancient faith. In reality, however, the establishment of a new faith was more accurately a long process of transformation which lasted until the end of the fifth century. The time of the conversion is compressed to the period of St. Gregory's (the Illuminator) missionary activity and the idea of a total conversion is conveyed by stressing the unanimity with which the nation embraces the new belief by employing phrases like "the king, the nobles and the common people", or "all the people and the king", where there is no question of exceptions or opposition. This total change is allegorically presented through the vision of Gregory with the image of herds of black goats who pass through waters and thereby turn instantly into white, shining sheep.

The conversion of Armenia was, in reality, more complicated. On the one hand, there were Christians in

The great work of the conversion of Armenia to the Christian faith, begun by Gregory, had been left unfinished in at least one very important respect. Gregory had seen the desirability to rendering the church of Armenia as soon as possible independent of foreign missionaries, and had accordingly established schools for the education of the people and for the training of indigenous clergy. But, as there was no Armenian literature or alphabet, he had not attempted to translate into the language of the people the scriptures and the service - books used in divine worship, 'Interpreters' were in hand to explain to the people in the vernacular the meaning of scriptures read in Syriac or Greek. This was a temporary measure, and it worked fairly well for a time. Following the death of Tiridates and during the persecution under Merouzhan, Greek was entirely prohibited, while no serious attempt was made to interfere with the use of Syriac. The congregation accustomed to worship in Greek found their clergy unable to interpret to them the Syriac scriptures. The result was that the people left their churches, ignorance of the doctrines of Christianity spread rapidly, and there was a great danger that the people would in consequence either lapse into their old pagan practices or at least be unable to withstand the efforts of their conversion to Magianism made by the

Persian court. It was this state of affairs which offered a fertile ground for numerous movements, anti-ecclesiastical dissensions, and sects to come into existence. Sects like the Manichaean, Messalian, Encratite, Montanist and Novatianist, which flourished in Asia Minor between the first and eighth centuries, found fertile ground in Armenia. This situation

'heresy' was any doctrine, whether within or outside the Christian community, which was evidently irreconcilable with Christianity

Armenia long before the missionary work of Gregory at the beginning of the fourth century. On the other hand, some early Armenian writers preserve accounts which point to a strong influence of the pre-Christian religion long after the official conversion of the country.

is attested by Movses Khorenatsi who, reflecting upon the period, comments in his *History* that 'the peace was disturbed, chaos became rooted, orthodoxy was shaken, and heterodoxy was established through ignorance'. Such a situation prepared the ground for and facilitated

the spread of anti-ecclesiastical dissensions referred to by historians with the customary invectives and perorations as 'brigands', 'schismatics', opponents of sound doctrine', 'dissentient tongues' who rise up in 'opposition to the wholesome teaching'.

Energetic inquisitorial action was taken against the Borborites in the Byzantine-controlled section of Armenia by Mesrob Mashtots on the authorization of the catholicos Sahak Partev. According to historian Koriwn, Mashtots had little success in converting the Borborites; thereupon, with the active aid of the Byzantine authorities, he turned to the harsher methods of imprisonment and even torture. Since the Borborites, despite these steps, remained unrepentant they were branded with the 'sign of a fox', and finally expelled from the land. During the period from 415-423 Mesrob Mashtots in his missionary work had to encounter the Messallians, a pietistic mendicant sect, that had originated in Mesopotamia around A.D. 300 and thence spread into Armenia. The radical form of asceticism which they preached maintained that the key to the problem of human salvation was a complete break with the world: a denial of literally every form of labor or activity that belonged to the world. In A.D. 447, the Armenian council of Shahapivan for the purpose of removing all the pagan survivals still persisting in the life of the people, dealt predominantly with moral questions, with the reformation of the church, which had yet not been rid of the ancient pagan customs and traditions. Some of the canons of the council are specifically concerned with several sects. This process of reformation was in actual fact put into motion by Mesrob Mashtots himself. In his compilation of sermons called *Yachakhapatoum* (sermons to be repeated often) he sets into motion a process that lead him directly to the urgent need of inventing an Armenian alphabet. Tradition and doctrine in

primitive Christianity were transmitted primarily by preaching, teaching and conversing. Writing and reading for religious purposes, though not unknown, were much less valued than oral communication. Reading, writing and com-

Sects flourished in Asia Minor between the first and eighth centuries, found fertile ground in Armenia

menting upon sacred texts only became important when internal controversies reached intolerable intensity. A religion orally transmitted leaves no traces—until the written phase is reached. The early translations of the Scriptures mark the beginning to the written phase of Christianity. The apostle authorship of Scripture was now the major criterion of the church's authority. A systematic reading of the Bible was to start in about the middle of the second century, followed by house to house visitation by instructors reading Christian texts aloud. The God-fearing man should consider it a great loss if he does not go to the place in which they give instruction, and especially if he knows to read' wrote Hippolytus (c. A.D. 217). In the *Yachakhapatoum* sermons (c. 431) Mesrob Mashtots in his own words sets himself the task not only unrestingly and unceasingly to teach and enlighten the people, but also that the people themselves have the opportunity to read and know. It was this motivation that drove Mesrob to crown his missionary work with the invention of the Armenian alphabet, followed by the translation of the Scriptures, and finally in words of his biographer Koriwn to "prepare diverse, easily understood and gracious sermons, full of the light and essence of the prophetic books and illustrations of the true evangelical faith". The purpose of these sermons was

"to make intelligible even to fools and to those distracted by secular things, to revive, to awaken, and to convince them of the rewards that have been promised". For Mesrob Mashtots and his disciples it was clear that unable to restrict theological inquiry, theological discussions presupposed a good knowledge of relevant texts.

In the context of the Byzantine Empire, followed by that of the Arab Caliphate, two powerful movements namely the Paulicians; and the Tondrakians played an important role both religiously and politically. The appearance of the two movements within the framework of medieval Armenian religious and secular history should be seen as part of the general revival, economic and cultural whose origins can be discerned as early as the eighth century. The emergence of the Paulicians on the eve of the Arab invasion of Armenia, A.D. 640-42 and the emergence of the Tondrakians in the 840's were expressions of vitality arising in the new social forms, and rise of cities, expanding commerce. Religion which had a great impact on daily life, and at the same time the secularization of society forced movements like the Tondrakians to advocate a return to apostolic times, the preaching of poverty, the intention to free the church from its enslavement to worldly ambition and wealth, protest against the authority of the hierarchy, against the abuse of sacraments, corruption among the clergy, are all factors which could arouse the emotions and fervor of not only the laity, but also of intellectuals like Grigor Narekatsi (945?-1003) and Anania Narekatsi (10th century). The non-theological aims of the movements inspired panic in the hierarchy of the church and the secular rulers whose policies towards the powerful neighbors were deemed unacceptable. The hidden revulsion created by the rather cavalier attempts to enforce religious conformity expressed itself through various heterodox movements such as Paulicianism, Tondrakianism, and Iconoclasm.

The persons who introduced Iconoclasm had no intention, I am sure, of altering dogma: they were simply anxious to correct what they saw as a devotional abuse. Only as the dispute spread and deepened was theology dragged into it. The use of icons penetrated Christian practice imperceptibly and practically unopposed. The patristic tradition, explicit as it was in condemning pagan idolatry, had almost nothing to say about Christian imagery, which is why, it was never censured by any council of the Church. By the eighth century no one had any clear recollection of how or when the use of icons had been introduced. So the Armenian iconoclasts who sided with the Paulicians against the Armenian Church did so not because of christological differences but in protest against what they considered an undue involvement of the Armenian hierarchy in the power struggle between Byzantium and Persia over Armenia and a corresponding neglect of its spiritual duties. The moderation in the use of images in the church was based on the idea that sanctity belonged to persons not to things. The Iconoclasts saw in the religious images unlawful rivals to the Christian ascetic. This dual protest against the secular clergy and against holy images, turned the Armenian movement into a sectarian movement which soon came to reject the sacraments and thus failed in its attempt to capture the Church. Church fathers Vrtanes Karthogh and Hovhannes Mayragometsi considered the Armenian movement primarily in the light of their hostility to images, ignoring totally the movement's emphasis on asceticism.

In the Kingdom of Cilician Armenia (1098-1375) Armenian kings did try to achieve Cilician-Armenian ecclesiastical identification in an attempt to secure union with the Roman Catholic Church. The Union with Rome, inaugurated in 1184 by Pope Lucius III and consolidated by Celestine III in 1198, was implemented on the Armenian side largely for political and diplomatic reasons by the ruling class in Cilicia, and never commanded the adhesive of the majority of Armenians living outside the Kingdom. The Latin

interference into Armenian affairs through the establishments of the *Fratres Unitores*, Franciscan and Dominican missions in Cilicia and Greater Armenia generated even greater ill-will towards Rome. The decisions of the council of Sis (1307) to force union/or accommodation with Rome which was reconfirmed at subsequent councils at Adana 1316 and at Sis in 1342, resulted in recriminations, counter-council, civil disobedience, governmental repression and schism. The problem involved politics as well as religion. The union was in the eyes of the clergy of Greater Armenia open to question. While the government sought political advantages, the clergy of the Gladjor University criticized the pro-unionist party and rejected the Union with Rome. They did this on theological grounds. Beginning with Nerses Shnorhali (c. 1102-1173), the clergy of Greater Armenia—led by powerful figures like Esayi Nchetsi (rector of Gladjor University), David Sasnetsi, Stepannos Orbelian and others—defied the Catholicos and the king and abandoned the Union. Once again the Armenian theologians proved that, while they were prepared to contemplate the mending of the rent in the church, they needed assurances that its true Orthodox faith is not compromised. The polemical and often repeated sterile accusation that Armenians rejected the council of Chalcedon—because “the defective rendering of Greek terms into Armenian and the imperfect knowledge of the proceedings of the council of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451)”—was once again proved beyond any doubt to be wrong. The arguments that recurred in the debates with the Chalcedonian churches were repeated in the course of the debates of the twelfth century, but which the Armenians could not accept. The Greek Orthodox church also in 1282 renounced the Union of Lyons (1274).

The Armenian theologian and church historian Erwand vardapet Ter Minassian in 1910 published a substantial document called *Hayots Ekeghetsou Veranorogutean Khndire* [The question of the renewal of the Armenian church] in which he systematically considers the state of

the Armenian church on the question of doctrine, worship, sacraments, and hierarchy. The interesting aspect of the document is that after the first two installments had been published in the official journal of the Etchmiadzin Catholicate *Ararat* (May-June, 1908), on the instruction of Archbishop Gevorg Sureniants, the remaining installments were mutilated and never printed. An article rejected the criticism levelled against the church was published by an author calling himself “*Batsakay Miaban*” [absent member]. Erwand Ter Minassian then send a letter of complaint to the newly elected Catholicos Ter Matheos II of Constantinople (1908-1910) requesting explanation for the imposition of censorship upon his views (2nd June 1909). After the death of Catholicos Matheos II, and with the election of Georg V Sureniants (1911-1930), this highly educated member of the Armenian church, Erwand Ter Minassian, left the church for secular life. The document itself and the suggestions it contains for the “renewal” of the Armenian church is highly unsatisfactory, coming from an intellectual of his standing. The reforms postulated are those of a mind trained in the western Protestant school of thought and on the face of it totally rejectable. But it does raise fundamental religious questions concerned with the individual conscience, society in general, and even political life in all of its manifestations. This living connection lends a particular social interest to the study and understanding of sects.

The movements in the Armenian church were not all the results of personality flaws or the voiced opinion of vain and prideful men. Rather attempt by the church to accommodate the teachings of the church to the prevailing thought forms and cultural values of the society in which the church found itself. These religious movements have been an integral part of the Armenian church, and their growth is a phenomenon which runs side by side with, often directly influencing, such well-known developments as the rise of authority, the growth of canon law, discipline, and the nature of church-state relations.

Post Script to "Sects in Armenian History"

Editors' Note: According to the order of their citation in the article, presented here are a brief description of each sect or movement.

SADDUCEES – A Jewish political-religious sect during the time of Christ. They rejected the oral tradition of interpretation as developed among the Pharisees and accepted the written Law only. They attacked the Apostles for preaching the resurrection of Christ, since they did not believe in retribution in an afterlife and in the resurrection of the body.

PHARISEES – A Jewish religious party. Unlike the Sadducees, they interpreted the Mosaic Law according to its application to different situations and regarded oral interpretation with the same level as the written law. Christ repeatedly denounced them for their mere external observance of the Law, their formalistic percepts of it and their self-righteousness.

DONATISTS – (4th century) A schismatic movement in the African Church, that separated from the catholic Church over the issue of *traditions*, i.e. Christians who surrendered the Scriptures when their possession was forbidden in the persecution of Diocletian. Donatist held that the Church of the saints must remain 'holy' and that sacraments conferred by *traditors* were invalid.

ARIANISM – (4th century) Originated by Arius, Bishop of Alexandria—the heresy which denied the true Divinity of Jesus Christ. The heresy taught that the Son of God was not eternal but created by the Father from nothing as an instrument for the creation of the world. Christ was not God by nature, but a creature and his dignity as Son was bestowed to him by the Father on account of His foreseen abiding righteousness.

NESTORIANS – Originated by Nestorius (d. c. 451) Bishop of Constantinople—the false teaching that there were two separate Persons in the Incarnate Christ, the one Divine and the other Human, as opposed to the orthodox doctrine that the Incarnate Christ was one Person, at once God and man. Nestorianism was characterized by the rejection of the term Theotokos (birth-giver-of-God) referred to the Virgin Mary.

MONOPHYSITES – (Gk. 'one-nature') Monophysitism is the doctrine that taught *one* Divine nature in the Person of the Incarnate Christ, as opposed to the orthodox teaching that Christ is Perfect God and Perfect Man in one Person. One of the most extremists of monophysites was Eutyches (d. 454) who was anathematized by the Church, including the Armenian Church.

MONOTHELITES – (Gk. 'one-will') A 7th century heresy confessing only one *will* in Christ, as opposed to two wills, Divine and Human. The heresy was of political rather than of religious origin, being designed to rally the Monophysites to the catholic Church.

ZOROASTRIANISM - The dominant religion of Persia, especially during the Sassanian dynasty (A.D. 211-640), is a system of religious doctrine ascribed to Zoroaster. He taught that the world was made by one 'Wise Lord' with the help of his Spirit and six other divine spirits or attributes of God. These spirits work against the Evil Spirit, who is also helped by six other spirits and tempts man to wrong.

MANICHAEANS - Originated by Mani (c. 216-276), a Persian, the sect is a mixture of Zoroasterianism, Gnosticism and Christianity. Mani was a dualist and taught that the world battled between the principles of spirit and matter, good and evil, light and darkness, heaven and earth in which the activities of a life-giving spirit, passionless Christ and suffering Jesus are manifested. Manichaeism was spread especially in the fourth and fifth centuries.

MESSALIANS –Also known as the Euchites, is a pietistic mendicant sect, originated in the Middle East (after the middle of the 4th century). 'Messalians' is derived from a Syriac word meaning 'praying people'. They believed that in consequence to Adam's sin everyone had a demon substantially united with his soul, and that this demon, which was not expelled by baptism, was completely liberated only by concentrated and ceaseless prayer. They also stressed the efficacy of ascetic practice.

ENCRATITES– A term used to describe several groups of early Christians who carried their ascetic practice and doctrine to extremes which were in most cases considered heretical. They commonly rejected the use of wine and flesh-meat, and sometimes marriage.

MONTANISTS - Originated by a 'prophet' Montanus—an apocalyptic movement (latter half of 2nd century) that lived in expectation of the speedy outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Church, of which it saw the first manifestation in its own prophets and prophetesses. As such, it disallowed second marriages, condemned the regulations on fasting as too lax, imposing a discipline of its own, and forbade flight in persecution.

NOVATIANISTS – Originated by a Roman presbyter Novatian—rigorist schismatics in the Western Church, who deplored concessions to those who had compromised with paganism, during the time of Pope Cornelius (c. 251). The movement arose out of the persecution of Christians by Emperor Decius (A.D. 249-50).

BORBORITES – A libertine Gnostics sect which flourished from the 2nd to the 5th centuries.

PAULICIANS – The name of the sect is derived from Paul of Samosata. A sect which professed a Dualistic doctrine,

distinguishing between the good God, the Lord of Heaven and creator of souls, and the evil God, the Demiurge and ruler of the material universe. Holding all matter to be evil, they denied the reality of Christ's Body and of the Redemption and considering Christ's most important work His teaching. Paulicians repudiated the Old Testament and held St. Luke and the Pauline Epistles in particular esteem. The origins of the sect are obscure. It is believed that their founder was Constantine of Mananali, who established a Paulician community in Armenia under Constantius II (641-68). In the 9th century they suffered persecution under Emperor Leo the Armenian, and later by Empress Theodora.

TONDRAKIANS – Founded by a Smbat, the sect takes its name from the village of Tondrak, Armenia (c. 9th century). The Tondrakian heretics rejected the authority of the Armenian Church's form of baptism, the eucharist and marriage. Particularly, they did not admit such Orthodox practices as fasts, the offering of sacrifice, ordination of priests and celebration of holy days.

ICONOCLASM – (Gk. 'image-breaker') A major controversy on the veneration of icons against the Greek Church (c. 725-842), which was accused of worshipping 'idols'. The controversy eventually became a political issue and is seen as the last step towards the great schism between East and West before the actual breach in the 11th century.

Heretics Denounced by the Armenian Church

(During ordination of a priest, the candidate is asked to renounce these heretics)

ARIUS OF ALEXANDRIA (c. 250-336) interpreted the dogma of the Incarnation in a purely rational way, Arius taught that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was not equal with the Father and that he was created and not begotten.

MACEDONIUS (d. c. 362) taught falsely that the Holy Spirit is a ministering creature.

NESTORIUS (d. c. 451) professed two separate persons in Christ, characterized by the rejection of the term Theotokos in reference to the Virgin Mary.

PAUL OF SAMOSATA (3rd Century) taught a form of dynamic Monarchianism where the Godhead was a closely knit Trinity of Father, Wisdom and Word, which until the creation, formed a single hypostasis.

SABELLIUS OF LIBYA taught of the revelation of God in three successive forms and "called the Trinity one hypostasis."

DIODORE OF TARSUS (d. c. 390) insisted on literal and historical exegesis and against Appollinarius, on the complete humanity of Christ.

THEODORE OF MOPSUESTIA (C. 350-428) taught the "continguity" of the two natures of Christ, but not their union from the time of the conception of the Word. Hence he called the Virgin Mary "christotokos" and not Theotokos.

MANI (MANES or MANICHAËUS) (c. 216-276) was a dualist, who taught that the world battles between the principles of spirit and matter; good and evil; light and darkness; and heaven and earth in which the activities of a life-giving spirit, passionless Christ and suffering Jesus are manifested.

EPICURUS (B. C. 342-270) held that the senses, as the one and only source of all our ideas, provided the sole criterion of all truth.

SOCRATES (B. C. 470-399), the famous Greek philosopher, who laid the foundations of the Western culture. His philosophy was directed toward analyses of the character and conduct of human life, which he assessed in terms of an original theory of the soul. He was condemned by the Church for his teaching that "matter is coeternal with the world."

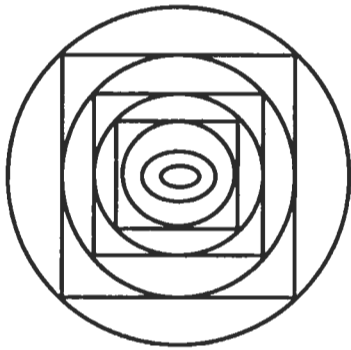
CARPOCRATES (2nd Century) taught that Jesus was born by natural generation from Mary and Joseph.

EUTYCHES (c. 378-454) denied that the generation of the Son took place within the Divine nature, but regarded Him as a being immediately produced by the Father, from whom he received the creative power.

ANTHROVIDOS taught that "Christ's body was brought from heaven and passed through the Virgin as through a conduit."

LEO (POPE) (d. 461) wrote (in his tome to Flavian, Patriarch of Constantinople) that Jesus Christ is One Person, who is the Divine Word and in whom are united the two natures, each of which exercising its own particular faculties.

List extracted from Hratch Tchilingirian, "Ordination to the Priesthood in the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church," Thesis at St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary, 1987, Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilm International, TREN 015-0069. Appendix I.



PROFILES OF CULTS IN ARMENIA

Editor's Note: Presented here are profiles of cults that have established roots in Armenia. While there are hundreds of cults operating around the world, our selection reflects those enumerated by Fr. Abel Oghlukian, Director of Christian Education Center in Yerevan, Armenia, during our meeting with him in New York. One of the most resourceful books available on cults and the nature of cults is Larson's Book of Cults, by Bob Larson (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. 1987) which gives an encyclopedic information on religions, cults and occults in world society, and particularly in the American society. In preparing these Profiles, we have extensively utilized Larson's data on cults, and at times used his descriptions in their entirety, for their precision and abridgement.

HARE KRISHNA

(International Society of Krishna Consciousness)

TYPE: Occult

FOUNDER: His Divine Grace, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (1896-1977) born in Calcutta, India.

TEXT: The Hindu sacred texts, especially *The Bhagavad-Gita* according to Prabhupada's interpretation.

SYMBOLS: Traditional Indian-style devotional paintings of gods and demi-gods, especially Lord Krishna as the Supreme Personality of the Godhead driving the chariot of Arjuna.

APPEAL: Youth in the sixties were ripe for exotic, simplistic answers to questions unfulfilled by technological advances. Even today, those frustrated by the vanity of materialism may resort to a system which totally rejects all pleasure from sensory gratification. The authoritarian structure of temple life may fill need for the disciplinary lifestyle being sought by some victims of this permissive age.

PURPOSE: ISKCON offers a highly religious life with dedication and the fellowship of like-minded adherents. All rituals and devotions are designed to free man from the ignorance of having forgotten his true personal relationship with Lord Krishna. This can be accomplished only by freeing the spiritual body from the physical body. Chanting Hare Krishna bypasses the intellect to cleanse the mind and heart of their false concept of concern for the material world.

ERRORS: The entire religious system of ISKCON is built upon mythological scriptures of legendary events and people (including Krishna). There is no sin to be saved from, there is only the illusion of evil to be eradicated. Jesus warned in Matthew 6:7 that "vain repetition" was a fruitless form of prayer. According to I Corinthians 8:6 there is but one Lord, Christ, and not Krishna. Jesus died of his own choice and rose from the dead. Krishna expired from an arrow in his foot and failed to conquer death.

MAIN CENTER: International Society of Krishna Consciousness, Los Angeles, California.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

TYPE: Pseudo-Christian Cult

FOUNDER: Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916) born in Pittsburgh, PA

TEXT: Isaiah 43:10 "You are my witnesses..."

SYMBOLS: The ubiquitous castle-shaped "watch tower" that appears on almost all their literature.

APPEAL: Those with an apocalyptic mentality may be enticed by the zealous desire of Witnesses who want to evangelize all the world before the end. Some not well-versed in Scripture may be attracted by what seem to be logical and reasonable explanations for hard-to-explain doctrines, such as the Trinity and the eternal punishment of the wicked.

PURPOSES: To usher in the Kingdom age of the Millennium and join Jehovah's forces who will triumph at Armageddon. Only faithful Witnesses will survive the battle. Since the 144,000 already sealed will remain in heaven with Christ, most current-day Witnesses look forward to living eternally on a perfected Earth.

ERRORS: Faulty biblical scholarship and out-of-context interpretations show Witnesses to discard most orthodox doctrines. The death of Christ is not seen as a ransom for sin but rather as the procurement of a second chance to be offered in the Millennium.

MAIN CENTER: Watch Tower Society, Brooklyn, NY.

TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION

TYPE: Occult

FOUNDER: Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, born in 1911, in India.

TEXT: Hindu Vedic scriptures including the *Bhagavad-Gita* which the Maharishi views as an "indispensable" religious document.

SYMBOLS: The Letters T and M, capitalized and appearing together (TM) as an abbreviated reference to Transcendental Meditation.

APPEAL: Most seekers do not turn to TM in a search to find religious truth. They are looking for a means of attaining inner peace and cessation of stress with little involvement of time or discipline. TM claims phenomenal psychophysiological benefits as well as release from guilt feelings.

PURPOSE: The public posture of TM insists that the Maharishi's mantras open the mind to a state of "bliss consciousness" which unleashes creative impulses and reduces stress. In the place of suffering and salvation, TM promotes health and happiness. Once there is one TM teacher for each 1,000 citizen on Earth, social ills and conflicts will cease. The esoteric aims are to introduce the meditator to the underlying Hinduistic theological precepts (i.e. "all is one" and man is a god). As for those who do not practice TM, the Maharishi says, "There will not be a place for the unfit...in the Age of Enlightenment." TM practitioners who go on to advanced stages will ultimately experience a merged unity with pure Being and may possibly become unwitting mediums for familiar spirits. (Though the Maharishi acknowledges the existence of demons, he cautions any contact with them.)

ERRORS: The TM initiation ceremony violates the First Commandment. Matthew 6:7 denounces the chanting of mantras. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's monist view of the universe is not compatible with the scriptural presentation of a personal God, who as Creator, is distinct from his creation. Christian meditation is an outward concentration on the Word and ways of God, whereas TM is a passive, selfish,

inward withdrawal from reality. The repetitious sensory stimulation dulls the conscious mind, and makes it vulnerable to evil invasion. Christ's blood atonement is rejected in the Maharishi's statement, "[TM] is the only way to salvation and success in life: there is no other way."

MAIN CENTER: TM Center, Seelisberg, Switzerland, there are TM centers in 140 countries.

Other Popular Cults

MORMONISM

TYPE: Pseudo-Christian Cult

FOUNDER: Joseph Smith (1805-1844) born in Sharon, Vermont. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints was founded in 1830.

TEXT: John 10:16, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold," supposedly refers to a Middle Eastern civilization that migrated to the Americas. Christ preached to them (the Nephites) after his resurrection. The Bible is the Word of God only "as far as it has been translated correctly." A Mormon article of faith states that "we also believe the *Book of Mormon* to be the Word of God."

SYMBOLS: The angel Moroni, usually perched atop temple spires, with trumpet in hand.

APPEAL: Outside observers who do not scrutinize Mormon doctrine may be attracted by their avoidance of unclean physical habits and the seriousness with which they take their faith. Members believe in the continuing function of divine revelation which gives a vitality and authority to their faith.

PURPOSE: Since Mormonism is the only restored, "true church," its concept of salvation must be strictly followed. The highest heaven is open only to faithful Mormons who will become gods and join in procreative partnership with God who was once as humans are now. Life on Earth is a discipline where one develops one's potential to rule a celestial kingdom with a spouse and children. Marriage and large families on Earth are encouraged as part of this evolving process toward equality with Christ who is the Mormon "elder brother." After death, Mormons in the heavenly realms seek to convert non-Mormons who dwell in the lower realm so these "gentiles" can also accept the revelations of Joseph Smith.

ERRORS: Mormons find themselves in the conundrum of having to modify or deny some of their more embarrassing past doctrines (e.g. blood atonement, Adam-God concept, polygamy, anti-Negroid beliefs) while according prophetic status to the men who taught such beliefs, such as Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. The priesthood concept is repudiated by Hebrews chapter 7 and I Peter 2:9, 10. The Aaronic and Melchizedek orders were consummated in Christ and now all believers are part of a "royal priesthood." The Mormon Jesus is not eternal God-Jehovah, able to "save them to the uttermost" (Hebrews 7:25). He is therefore "another Jesus," and Moroni is the false angel of the "accused" gospel of which St. Paul speaks in Galatians 1:8.

MAIN CENTER: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

TYPE: Pseudo-Christian Cult

FOUNDER: Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910), incorporated in 1879.

TEXT: Matthew 9:2 ("...and He was transfigured before them [Peter, James & John]) supposedly an affirmation of Mary Baker Eddy's own healing which led her to formulate Christian Science belief.

SYMBOLS: The seal of a cross ringed by a crown

APPEAL: The healing and health promised by Christian Science meets man's emotional need to overcome fear of pain and suffering. Eddy's teachings appeal to those seeking a philosophical basis for ignoring man's unregenerate nature and necessity of repentance. The reality of evil can be excused as an apparition of the mind.

PURPOSE: The "myth" of traditional Christian belief must be eradicated. Man is perfect and should strive for the same Divine Mind that Jesus attained. Sickness can be eradicated once a person sees that pure thoughts will dispel the illusion of disease. As the one true church, members are encouraged to affirm that God is good and therefore good is God. In such a system evil cannot exist since matter (evil) does not exist.

ERRORS: Christian Science is biblically not Christian and it is manifestly not scientific. Its theology is universalistic. Jesus was said to be hiding in the sepulcher, i.e. he did not die, so his resurrection holds no hope for believers, contradicting St. Paul's exposition of I Cor. 15, "Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?"

MAIN CENTER: Mother Church in Boston, MA. Local churches in most U.S. cities.

DAILY NEWSPAPER: Christian Science Monitor with half a million subscribers, a highly respected journalistic organ with several Pulitzer prizes to its credit.

WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

TYPE: Pseudo-Christian Cult

FOUNDER: Herbert W. Armstrong (1892-1984), born in Des Moines, Iowa. Cult founded in Eugene, Oregon, in 1934

TEXT: Emphasis on Old Testament Scriptures regarding feasts, festivals, and dietary laws.

SYMBOLS: Visual - "The World Tomorrow," a theme of media broadcasts and publications.

APPEAL: Conservatively inclined people concerned about moral decay may be attracted by Armstrong's denunciation of social evils and calls for biblical allegiance. WCG broadcasts and publications contain a measure of truth that draw disaffected traditional church members. The absence of overt fund solicitation and the sobering style of their news commentaries give a respectability that belies the true nature of Church activities and doctrines.

PURPOSE: Herbert W. Armstrong believes that the true Church and its pure message has been underground for 1900 years. And, just prior to the return of Christ, he had been called of God to bring a message that will dispel the confusion of all other false denominations who consider themselves Christians. The Worldwide Church of God is the only legitimate representative of the Gospel of Christ.

ERRORS: Armstrong has changed the gospel by adding laws and commandments to the message of grace, a violation of the principles set forth in Colossians 2 and Romans 14. Ephesians refutes the ethnic and nationalistic superiority inherent in the unbiblical theory of Anglo-Israelitism.

MAIN CENTER: Worldwide Church of God, Pasadena, California.

UNIFICATION CHURCH (Moonies)

TYPE: Personality Cult

FOUNDER: Rev. Sun Myung Moon, born in 1920, in Korea.

TEXT: *Divine Principle* by Rev. Moon. Moon's revelations are said to be the "things to come" referred

to in John 16:13.

SYMBOLS: A square surrounded by a circle. Four spokes radiate from the outer circle to the center where they meet a smaller darkened sphere inside the square. This inner circle radiates spokes to the edge of the square.

APPEAL: Many Moonies are former evangelicals or frequent churchgoers. Their frustrations with hypocrisy and lack of dynamic leadership led them to Moon. In the Unification Church they discover authority, a non-judgemental, accepting kind of love, and a vision for world unity and peace.

PURPOSE: Cult literature states, "In the work of restoration [mankind's salvation], God worked to find one individual who could overcome his evil nature, and on the foundation of that person's faith to find a family around him, a society, a nation, and finally to restore the whole world." Christianity holds no hope since God has discarded it as a corrupt and outdated religion. God is pictured as a sad creature, surrounded by evil and estranged from his creation. Moon is the man who will cheer God's heart by accomplishing what Christ failed to do: redeem man physically from the curse of the serpent's sexual seduction of Eve.

ERRORS: The God depicted in *Divine Principle* is neither omnipotent nor sovereign in earth's affairs. Assigning a female nature to the Holy Spirit and ridiculing Christ's resurrection is blasphemy of the highest order. Moon's doctrine of sinless perfection by "indemnity" (forgiveness of sin by works on Moon's behalf), which can apply even to deceased ancestors, is a denial of the salvation by grace offered through Christ (Galatians 1, Ephesians 2:9, 9). The warning in Matthew 24 regarding false prophets is clearly fulfilled in Moon's doctrine and claims to spiritual authority.

MAIN CENTER: The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity., Washington, D.C.

SCIENTOLOGY

TYPE: Occult

FOUNDER: L. Ron Hubbard. Church of Scientology founded in Washington, D. C. in 1955.

SYMBOLS: A cross, believed to have ancient religious connotations with the bar denoting matter and the vertical symbolizing spirit.

APPEAL: Among those drawn to Scientology are disaffected youth looking for a simple, structured view of life; emotionally distraught individuals who shun traditional psychiatric techniques because they are too complex; and seekers of truth who are impressed with the dramatic claims of physical well-being and positive mental development promised by Dianetics.

PURPOSE: Scientology purports to explain all of life's difficulties and contradictions in terms of occurrences in past lives. These mental blocks are removed so the individual can return to the deified state from which he came many incarnations ago.

ERRORS: Occult practices of age regression and astral travel are based on theories of reincarnation. Extrabiblical information regarding man's origin (as a god called thetan) and mystical beliefs regarding the relationship of spirit and matter are essential to Dianetics. Man is good, Christ was merely a "cleaned" individual, and the existence of an eternal heaven and hell is denied.

MAIN CENTERS: Washington, D.C., Sussex, England, Los Angeles, CA.

Commonalties Among Cults:

All cults consider the claims of Christ to be optional, not essential to salvation.
All the answers to mankind's great questions are dismissed by merging one's ego into the common good of the cult's vision for the future.

BIBLICAL DOCTRINES

UPON WHICH THE CLAIMS OF CULTS MUST BE SCRUTINIZED

1) Attributes of God

According to the Old and the New Testaments, God has a triune nature—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are co-equal, co-existent, and co-eternal. Three Persons of the same Substance (John 1:1-3; 14:26. God is eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, perfect and holy.

Scriptural references:
Exod. 3:14; Ps. 90:2; Is. 43: 10; I Cor. 8:6; I Tim. 2:5;

According to cults:

God is impersonal, unknowable essence. God is a divine idea or principle or example. God is not trinitarian.

2) Person of Christ

According to the Nicene Creed, we believe "in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of God the Father, only-begotten, that is of the substance of the Father...Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, was incarnate, was made man, was born perfectly of the holy virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit: by whom he took body, soul and mind and everything that is in man, truly and not in semblance."

Scriptural references:
Jn. 1:1-3 & 14; I Jn. 4:3; Eph. 1:21; Col. 2:9.

According to cults:

Christ is a mere human being without divinity, who attained "Christ consciousness." He is a created being and one of many *avatars* or revelations of God.

3) Nature of Man

According to Genesis 1:26, God created man, male and female, in his own image and likeness, perfect and without sin so that he could know and love God. But man's failure in the garden of Eden is his sin or his fall, and it is only through Christ that he could be saved from his sins.

Scriptural references:
Ps. 51:5; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 1:21, 5:12 & 19.

According to cults:

Man is divine, an emanation of the infinite Impersonal. He is sinful but capable of attaining the same "Christ Consciousness" that Jesus did. Man is destined to be god.

4) Salvation

According to the Scriptures, Christ shed his blood as the final sacrifice and cleansing of man's sin, (I Jn. 1:7). Man, whose sinful rebellion has separated him from God, can now have "peace through the blood of His cross" (Col. 1:20) and be "reconciled" with God (II Cor. 5:19).

Scriptural references:
Acts 4:12; Rom. 5:8; Heb. 9:22; I Pet. 2:24; I Jn. 1:9.

According to cults:

Good works and beneficent deeds will cause one to achieve atonement with god. Reincarnation will fulfill the law of karma. Universalism: all will eventually be saved.

5) Source of Revelation

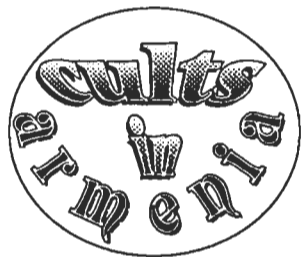
The Bible is the inspired Word of God (God-breathed), inerrant, complete and the only infallible rule of faith, (Rev. 22:18, 19). The Bible reveals the origin and destiny of all things; records God's dealings with mankind in the past, present and the future; and focuses on the Person and ministry of Jesus Christ. The Bible inspires faith (Rm. 10:17) and will make men "wise unto salvation," (II Tim. 3:15).

Scriptural references:
Ps. 119:10; Isa. 40:8; Heb. 4:12; II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:21.

According to cults:

The Bible needs additional subjective or written revelation for our age. The Word of God needs to be properly translated with accompanying explanations. The bible is one of many equally divine, sacred books.

“I Didn't Want to Struggle”



Interview with an Armenian Hare Krishna

conducted by
Armen Sedrakian

Armen Sedrakian: *Tell me about your background.*

Hare Vilas DAS: I was born in 1946 in Philadelphia. My family belonged to the St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church, in Philadelphia. At that time, we were in North Philadelphia, a black neighborhood.

I was named Hampartzoum Terhanian. My father came from Malatya before the massacres. And my mother went through the whole massacres. She walked from Malatya to Del-el-Zor. She was an orphan. She went through a horrendous, terrible experience.

My father was a member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, and I was a member of the AYF, the Armenian Youth Federation. I always appreciated my membership and my experience in the AYF. When I went to the University of Pennsylvania, I started an Armenian club there. I went to a Mkhitarist summer school [in Massachusetts] to learn a little bit of Armenian. I enjoyed that too. I went to the AYF camp in Franklin. I used to have a good time with different Armenian organizations.

AS: *You also had gone to Beirut?*

HV: Yes, after I graduated from college, I went to the Palandjian Jemaran in Beirut to really study Armenian. I spent almost a year there.

At that time, it was almost like going back to the old country because in 1968-69, that was like a good time for being an Armenian in Beirut. There was a lot of cultural, communal activity. I lived there and I got a real taste for what it's like to

be in a fully integrated Armenian community. I realized that being born in America, with a strong desire to be Armenian, going back to that modern type of Armenian community was very difficult.

AS: *Why was it difficult?*

HV: It was difficult because of cultural differences. I was brought up in America. When I got there at first I could speak Armenian, but not very well. It was always an uphill battle for me to be a part of or identify with that community. I tried my best.

At one point I failed in my attempt. It was not their fault, but it was more my fault because I [allowed] my bad habits [to come] out like wanting to have a good time, running around, frivolous. That stopped me from getting into the community. The Armenians I thought, although I had some great Armenian friends who were locked into—at least the community I was living in—a political ideology. Because of that, they were closed in on themselves. I saw that as too stifling.

I got as much out of that experience as I could. But I failed in their eyes as an Armenian.

AS: *When did you start your search for spiritual truth?*

HV: I was very disillusioned when I left Beirut and I went to Paris. ...[I] decided to stay in the Armenian House there, the Armenian student house. There I became very seriously inclined towards the Armenian church. I became friends with a young priest at that time called Father Norvan. He is a bishop now, Bishop of Lyon. He was the first Armenian priest that I saw that was

actually trying to live his faith. This inspired me tremendously. And I used to go with him to church 3-4 times a week, helped him clean the altar. We used to talk about all different types of things. He used to teach me about the Mass, the liturgy, and we used to read the Bible together. We used to sit and talk... We were really good friends, like brothers. He was a young priest. He would always feel a little tortured in his heart because he'd feel very frustrated by other priests who were not actually fired with spiritual experience, they were more perfunctory. They were more involved with politics and personal self-aggrandizement through the church. And he would try to live a pure type of experience as much as possible in a city like Paris in a student house where most of the students were pretty frivolous.

I was staying near him in another room with another *vartabed*. He was very embarrassingly materialistic, although he was a lover of Armenian culture, a lover of the church, very nationalistic, and he knew his Bible very well. I used to study the Bible with him, too. But he would break down very easily into desiring sensual pleasures. So that bothered me a lot.

There was a tremendous contrast between the two. It bothered my friend too. So as time went on I became interested not only in the church, but in other philosophies, too. I was interested in Zen-macrobiotic diets and a little bit of the Zen philosophy. And then I met Krishna Consciousness.

Not only that, I was meeting all

types of different [people]. I met one black man who was a writer and [a] real far out guy. He was travelling through Paris and didn't have a place to stay so I brought him back to the Armenian House. This created a sensation, especially with the priest that I was staying with. I was creating controversy in the Armenian House, bringing a black man in.

This also highlighted another experience I had when I was young in church. Our church was in North Philadelphia, on Oxford Street, which is a very heavily black neighborhood. It was right across the street from Father Divine Mission. It was a very bad neighborhood even at that time. Of course, when the church was first built, that was a kind of an Armenian neighborhood.

At that time, I remember when I was 8 or 9 years old, one black man walked into the church. I was standing near the entrance. He was surrounded immediately by 6-8 of the older men. And they said, "What do you want?" He said, "Man, I want to come in here and worship Jesus." They said, "This church is not for you." "Why not, man? I'm a Christian." They said, "Yea, but this is an Armenian church. It's only for Armenians." "What's Armenian, man? I'm a brother. I believe in Jesus." They said, "Yea, it's not that you have to just believe...."

So there was a little bit of an argument. They went back and forth. Finally, the guy walked out. I saw the whole thing and it puzzled me. I couldn't figure it out at the time why I was puzzled, but it always stuck in my mind.

Now, here again in Paris, I bring this black man. This black man is a controversial guy. He's outspoken, far out, freethinker, world traveller, doesn't have a penny in his pocket, and about 65 years old. Again, it created a controversy. There's this latent type of prejudice or racism which is a little bit contradictory to the spirit of Christianity.

So as time went on I became a little more disenchanted with the church because I was getting so close to it, I would see the internal politics. I would see how my sincere friend was suffering because he had to deal with so many other priests who

were not living the experience of the passion of Christ.

So I found it to be too much of a stifling atmosphere for me. I wanted to find a spirituality that was not necessarily devoid of any rules but the rules were realistic toward the aspiration. There was an honest criterion, not a double standard — where we're talking about the Bible and Jesus, but when we relax we're trying to find some girls, drinking, or eating basterma or soujoukh, acting like low class people.

Finally, I got into the Bagavat Gita. India always seemed to me to be a frightening place, a very confusing place, philosophies... I could never get into it. But when I read the Bagavat Gita by his divine grace A.C. Swami Prabhupada, my future spiritual minister, there was this clarity coming from this vast sub-continent of confusion. I read it and realized I didn't understand much of [it]; there was a lot there that I couldn't digest.

...I saw that in the Armenian church that same purity was there, especially, in the sharagans and the liturgy. Somehow or another, it was not actualized in the behavior and attitudes of the people or many of the clergy. Of course, Father Norvan... was desperately trying to live it. Even today, many people love him very much because he tries to be as sincere as possible, but he was

struggling. I didn't want to struggle. I wanted to be in an atmosphere where that was the norm rather than the exception. So that there could be a free flow of expression, spiritual expression.

...The material motivation in religion is a step down from the essence of Christ's teachings. That has to be purified, but that can not be purified just by perfunctory actions. It has to be purified by actual living of the faith and practice. And I saw that integral practice in Krishna Consciousness where you join, it is like a monastic life. And you realize I'm not the proprietor of anything, not even this body. Everything is actually the proprietorship of God. Adjusting the concept of proprietorship to me was fundamental because this whole world in a sense is divided ideologically, politically, and militarily on concepts of proprietorship. Capitalism says that the individual is the proprietor, all the laws in the country try to protect that. Communism says that the community is the proprietor or the people are the proprietors. Socialism says that the government is the proprietor. Monarchy says that the king is the proprietor, that nobles are the proprietors. Fascism says that a small group of industrialists and military men are the proprietors. Anarchism says that no one is a proprietor. When I was thinking about this, I

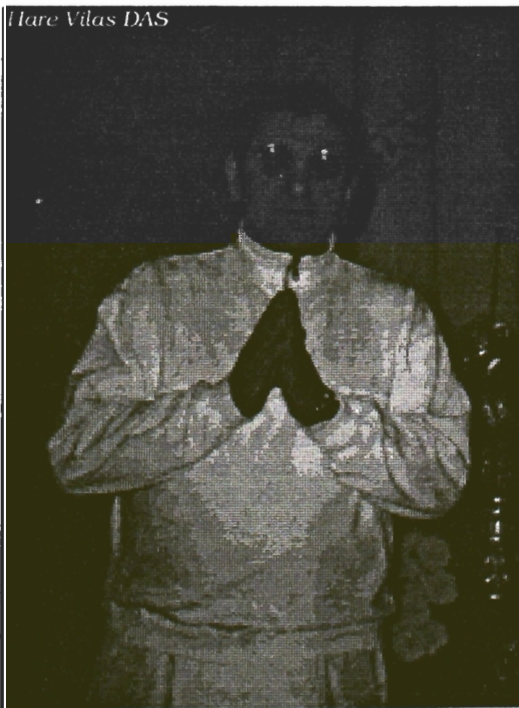
realized that the Creator is the real proprietor. So all these other economic and political philosophies are actually wrong. Because they are wrong, if you follow something that is wrong from the beginning, that means everything else is tempered by that incorrectness.

AS: You were disappointed by the perfunctory performance of Armenian clergymen. What is there to protect followers of Hare Krishna from this same perfunctory attitude? You have your traditions, you shave your head, you have your chants, you have your certain style of dress that set you apart.

HV: There's no guarantee. These things have happened in the Krishna movement too. Terrible things have happened.

AS: What would stop someone from being disillusioned with Krishna Consciousness?

Hare Vilas DAS



HV: The main thing, the saving grace whether it be in Krishna Consciousness or Christianity is faith in the spiritual mentor. When you say, "My neighbor is a hypocrite, I'm also a hypocrite; but Jesus wasn't a hypocrite. Therefore, there is hope for me."

My god-brother in Krishna Consciousness is a hypocrite, I'm also a hypocrite; but my spiritual master, Shila Prabhupada was not a hypocrite. (Prabhupada literally means the master at whose feet many masters are sitting.)

AS: Is Swami Prabhupada alive?

HV: No, he left this world in 1977.

AS: Who is now leading the Krishna Consciousness movement?

HV: He left physically, but he's still here. He's still directing this movement in every way. He left in place a governing body commission of, let us say, his secretaries, about thirty of them. I'm one of them. They are supposed to manage his organization according to his wishes. There is no one unique successor. He taught everyone to be his successor.

AS: When one become a member of the Krishna movement, does one disown personal property?

HV: One disowns the idea that I am the proprietor. One becomes like a cashier in the bank. In the morning, the cashier comes to the bank, the cashier receives the cashbox, performs all the operations during the day, at no time does the cashier consider that the money belongs to him, and yet they handle the money as if it belongs to them, they have physical possession, at the end of the day they return the cashbox with the accounts balanced, then they go home.

There are two types of householders. One is the dependent one. He lives at the temple and accepts on a voluntary basis with his wife's consent anything the temple can offer him. And he does not try at all for economic development. The other ... due to his wife's objection or his own personal preferences does not want to live like that. He wants to have his own things, is not satisfied

with what the temple can provide. Therefore, he lives outside, but with the spirit of renunciation. In other words, he doesn't increase constantly his material needs to where he is at the point that he has no time for spiritual life. There's always volun-

as knowledge of their souls are concerned.

AS: You brought this up earlier. Why did the genocide happen?

HV: The answer is very simple. Because there are many parts of the theology of Christianity that are

missing, we have an incomplete understanding of purity or clean spirituality.

When we kill animals and eat them we are committing a sin. But according to Christianity, it is not a sin because the animal doesn't have a soul. But from the realistic point

...the same purity was in the Armenian church, especially in the sharagans and the liturgy, somehow it was not actualized in the attitudes of the people...

of view, there is a great crime being committed.

So Armenians don't understand. "What have we done wrong that God should punish us like this?" There are many other instances like this, but this is a fundamental example of suffering that is coming from the ignorance of reality, from illusion.

What is that overriding arrogance that says that the animal doesn't have a soul and the human being does?

AS: Do plants have souls?

HV: Yes.

AS: But you eat plants. And you kill plants.

HV: Yes. ...But let's look at the perfect human couple, Adam and Eve before they fell from the Garden of Eden. What were they eating?

AS: They were eating the meats of fruits.

HV: Fruits of the tree. Were they killing the tree? And when you eat a fruit you spit out the seeds. Each seed could produce another tree with hundreds and thousands of fruits and millions of seeds. This is the principle of non-violence.

They were living in brotherhood with the animals.

AS: Are you fruitarians yourselves?

HV: We're vegetarians.

AS: But you're eating plants that were killed.

HV: Yes, on this basis. Krishna says in the Bagavat Gita, the 9th chapter, "Offer to me in love and devotion a leaf, water, fruit and flower and I will accept it."

tary self-restraint. But he is not restrained enough to accept what the temple offers. So he wants a little more than that.

AS: What is the difference between Christian and Krishna spirituality?

HV: The only difference is between a Webster's Pocket Dictionary and a Webster's International Dictionary. ...It is one of completeness of information. And I see Christianity as comparable to the pocket dictionary, and Krishna Consciousness as comparable to the international dictionary. There's a tremendous amount of elaboration, scientifically verifiable details, about spiritual life in Krishna Consciousness that are there in germ form or in a budding form in Christianity but have not been clearly explained or elaborated. Therefore, the Christian faith is one that is evolving.

[An] unfortunate philosophical mistake in Christianity is thinking that human beings only have souls and animals don't. If we look at the question objectively, from the Vedic point of view an ant, a microbe, a tree, an elephant, a monkey, a human being; they all have souls. The soul is not lesser in an ant than it is in a human being. The only difference is one of consciousness. In the body of the ant, the soul is more profoundly covered with this ignorance about the truth of his situation than in a human body. But there is no guarantee because you have human beings who act and behave no better than an ant as far

Soon on the permission of Krishna, not only do we pick apples without killing a tree, but we might pick a cabbage. That is killing. But by this principle of preparing the food for the pleasure of Krishna with love and devotion. And offering to Krishna so that he accepts it. The fact that he accepts it, the soul in the vegetable is elevated much quicker to the human form of life. When I eat that vegetable that is offered to Krishna, my life and my consciousness is sanctified.

AS: *Why isn't thanking God for the life of the slaughtered lamb analogous to eating a head of cabbage?*

HV: Because Krishna doesn't accept it. Krishna was a cowherd. He protected cows and calves. He protected the lambs; he never ate them because they're developed beings. The soul in the body of the plant is very profoundly covered by ignorance. The soul in the body of the animal is developed. He perceives happiness and distress. The plant does too, but in a much more restricted sense. The animal definitely perceives happiness and distress, definitely has feelings, definitely perceives the unjustness of him being slaughtered for the greedy palate of the human being.

AS: *Who is Jesus Christ in your opinion?*

HV: Jesus [is] the son of Christ; Jesus [is] the son of God. And Krishna is his father.

AS: *Do you believe he is the only begotten son?*

HV: Well, we believe that he is the son of God. When you say "the only begotten son of

God", no, because we are all the sons of God. But he's special because he was surrendered to the will of his father; we're not.

AS: *So you don't believe that Jesus is God?*

HV: He is godly.

AS: *But he is not God?*

HV: He is as good as his father because he is surrendered to him. But there is a difference. As an Apostolic Armenian, we also admit that there is a difference between God the father and God the son. There are

three distinct individuals with one nature. That's the monophysite belief.

AS: *What is your role now in the Armenian community?*

HV: For some years my work was to translate. I started that in 1982. When I was in Paris, I had a friend of mine whose name was Professor Kegham Shahinian. He had been a professor in Soviet Armenia. He was originally born in Syria. He agreed to do this translation work. He did a very good job. I worked closely with him. So we produced about 4-5 Armenian books. The main work was the Bagavat Gita.

At that time, I had no idea how I was going to distribute them. It was all done in the Eastern Armenian dialect which precluded its distribution amongst Western Armenians who have some kind of prejudice against the alphabetical changes. Professor Shahinian was very correct in his point of view that it should be done in the Eastern Armenian dialect because that's where the future of the Armenian language is. So I agreed with him.

He's a very highly educated man. The only trouble with Shahinian was that although he could understand very well, assimilate and translate these philosophical concepts, he just couldn't assimilate it himself into his own life. It remained unfortunately only academic for him although he appreciates very much Krishna Consciousness. I guess basically living in the Soviet Union, in an oppressive atmosphere, he

books imported into the Soviet Union and distributed in Soviet Armenia. Of course, the Armenian devotees, in '87-'88, were printing these translations, that I had done, in a clandestine way through clandestine presses.

During the earthquake, they distributed 10,000 books that they had printed in the country itself. The copy of the book: Beyond Birth And Death. About a year ago, I purchased a computer so that the Soviet Armenian devotees could do the work themselves.

Soviet Armenia has sent one devotee to Sweden where we have an international set-up for translating books into Soviet languages. He's working there. Soviet Armenian devotees are themselves translating.

Of course, I was doing it all in Paris before, but now there are a whole bunch of Soviet Armenian devotees. At least 100 dedicated people there. They are doing all the work there and having it produced in Sweden.

AS: *How many Armenians are following the Krishna movement now?*

HV: We have about a hundred initiated devotees, but there are many others that follow but maybe are not convinced enough to take initiations yet. Some of the Armenians have been martyred already before the change of attitude in the Soviet government and, of course, the puppet government in Soviet Armenia.

AS: *How did the Krishna movement initially get its start in Soviet Armenia?*

HV: That is another reason I think there was an earthquake in Armenia.

AS: *You mean the fact that the Hare Krishnas were persecuted in Armenia?*

HV: Yes! And one or two of them were killed...[in psychiatric wards].

The Soviet

Armenian government tried to fanaticize the people against Hare Krishna. They did a program on television proving that Hare Krishna was the enemy of the Armenian nation. That it's taking children away

Little by little, the movement spread. Now it has taken root. The only problem in Soviet Armenia is the nationalists. They're very fanatic...

had this natural hesitancy and a little bit of an abhorrence of anything that's a little bit authoritarian.

In 1989 when there were some dramatic changes in the Soviet Union, we were able to have all the

from their mothers and convincing them not to fight for its homeland. They brought in a lot of Armenian psychologists and Soviet psychologists speaking how Hare Krishna philosophy deteriorates the mental faculty.

AS: *How did the Armenians first get exposed to Hare Krishna?*

HV: My spiritual master, his divine grace A.C. B. Swami Prabhupada went to Moscow in 1972. At that time, there was one Russian person that actually was very attracted. A boy that was met by accident on the street in Moscow. He became a devotee, and he started preaching actively. From his preaching, the movement spread all throughout the Soviet Union, including Armenia....

Little by little, the movement spread. Now it has taken root. The only problem in Soviet Armenia like in Georgia and Azerbaijan are the nationalists. They're very fanatical.

AS: *Are there Azeri converts to Hare Krishna?*

HV: Yes. ...The Azeri Turks are translating Prabhupada's books into Azeri Turkish.

We have devotees in Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran, not so many in Turkey. All throughout the Soviet Union, there must be about 600-1000 devotees.

The Soviet Armenian devotees are very, very well liked and respected because they are very good devotees. They were persecuted, many of them were in jail, and subjected to international attention as a

dear to me, my great aunt, she was from Malatya. She was a survivor. She taught me the Armenian prayers. Grigor Naregatsi....

One day we were talking. I said to her, "Auntie, you know that Jesus is Jewish? He's not Armenian." She said, "No, my son. That's not right. Jesus is Armenian." It broke my heart to pursue the discussion. I realized that this was pinnacle to her faith. "Jesus is Armenian, not Jewish."

Another thing that she said that really inspired me, she told

me, "In our church in Malatya, the priest's feet would not touch the floor during the liturgy." I was thinking how unfortunate I was growing up and missing that type of vision and faith.

The dilemma was that faith ignorance or something else, was it purity? This is the question we have to ask. I maintain that loss of purity leads to ignorance.

The knowledge that we're learning today betrays our purity and leads us into ignorance.

I'd like to tell the Armenians to go back to simplistic faith and resist the sting of modern education whether it is socialism, political ideologies, economic strategies, adulation of the Jews. Whatever. Resist all that. Stick to simplistic faith.

*During the earthquake,
Armenian devotees
distributed 10,000 books
that they had printed ...*

persecuted religious minority. They were not afraid to stand up for their faith. That's why they are very good devotees. This is like a heroic beginning, and I think it has a great future in Soviet Armenia. Obviously, the more things develop politically and economically, our people are going to suffer tremendously. They are going to look for some relief. The relief is going to come by breaking down the ethnic barriers. In the Soviet Union that's a major problem. It's a major problem in the United States too. But we sort of try to cover it over.

AS: *What closing statement would you like to make considering that the readers are very interested in the Armenian church?*

HV: My auntie who was actually very

FINAL COMMENTS BY THE INTERVIEWER

I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls.

For my yoke is easy
and my burden is light.

—Matthew 11:29.

Legalism and spirituality don't mix. Yet, legalism permeates nearly every non-Christian and Christian "cult". For example, Krishna Consciousness takes a legalistic and inconsistent position on food and the eternal soul. Why does Krishna (God) permit the killing of a cabbage but not the killing of a lamb if they both have equivalent souls?

In contrast, Jesus, supposedly respected by the Hare Krishnas, broke many, many Jewish laws and traditions. In fact, he said that what goes into the mouth does not matter as much as what comes out of it.

Furthermore, the two greatest commandments are the love of God and the love of neighbor. Do we need to make more man made regulations?

After spending four hours with Hare Vilas, I'm convinced of his sincerity and agree with him that we must return to our simple faith and avoid the seduction of technology and materialism. I would also like to apologize to him if, during editing, I misrepresented him in any way.

Finally, hypocrisy unfortunately exists everywhere. Hare Vilas said he turned away from Christianity because of the hypocrisy of its so called members. But he also admits to hypocrisy among the Krishna movement. So looking for perfection in any religious organization will lead to disappointment. But to all of us who call ourselves Christians we must remind ourselves, "but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and be drowned in the depth of the sea." — Matthew 18:6.

Compendium

A reception in honor of His Holiness Vazken I, hosted by the President of Republic of Armenia, Levon Der Bedrosian, was held in November 1990 at the Armenian Parliament presidium. At the reception, the President noted that the Armenian political and religious leadership is united in their efforts to strengthen the state and ensure its flourishing development. At the conclusion of his remarks, His Holiness submitted a bill to the President, on the "Freedom of Conscience", which was elaborated by the Supreme Spiritual Council of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Holy Etchmiadzin.

On November 15, 1990, His Holiness Karekin II and his entourage had an audience with the President of Lebanon, Elias Hrawi, where they discussed the situation in Lebanon and the efforts that were needed to reconstruct the political, social and economic stability of the country.

On February 1, 1990, the Armenian Council of Ministers formed a Committee for Church Affairs and appointed Ludwig A. Khachaderian as its chairman. Until the proclamation of independence, it was the Council of Religious Affairs of ASSR which dealt with the church and her administration within the framework of Soviet bureaucracy.

The 7th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches was held in Canberra, Australia, from February 6 to 21, 1991, with the participation of 317 member churches from around the world. The Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church, a full member of WCC, was represented by a delegation from Holy Etchmiadzin and Antelias. On this occasion, His Holiness Vazken I sent a letter addressed to the General Assembly, in which he asked the help and moral support of all churches concerning the situation of the Armenian Church in Azerbaijan. He specifically, mentioned the January 21 decision of the Azerbaijani Government to close down the historic monasteries of Amaras (4th century) and Kantzasar (13th century) in autonomous Karabagh. These churches were confiscated in 1929 by the Soviet authorities, but were returned to Holy Etchmiadzin in 1989 and were renovated by the efforts of the faithful of the region. His Holiness wrote, "In the name of freedom of religion, we call upon you to help our Church in this conflict. In the name of Christian faith, we urge you to raise your voice in defense of our houses of worship against the new maneuvers of the authorities, whose goal is to silence our Christian churches."

As it was expected, the Assembly adopted a resolution on Karabagh, expressing concern over the "worsening situation" in the region. The world organization appealed to all parties involved "to seek ways to resolve the conflicts in the region through peaceful means" and called upon the leaders of the Soviet Union "to take immediate measures to safeguard legitimate religious, cultural and national interests, including the right to self-determination of the Armenian people of Karabagh."

During the 7th General Assembly, Archbishop Aram Keshishian, Primate of Lebanon, was elected Chairman of the Executive Body of WCC.

CENTER FOR PROPAGATION OF CHRISTIANITY IN ARMENIA

Through the efforts of His Holiness Vazken I, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, a Center for the Propagation of Christianity (CPC) was founded in Armenia, headed by Very Rev. Fr. Abel Oghlukian. The primary objective of the Center is to spread the "Light of the Gospel" among the Armenians, according to the doctrines and tenets of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church. Among the developing projects of the Center are: 1) Training of teachers for religious education, 2) Establishing Sunday Schools throughout Armenia, 3) Publications on the history, doctrines, liturgy, and other matters concerning the Armenian Church, 4) Establishing religious education courses in schools and universities, 5) Radio and television programs on religious matters, 6) Preparation of textbooks for children, 7) Establishment of other centers in the various dioceses of Armenia.

Recently, in an effort to acquire the assistance of the Diaspora in the overall mission of CPC, Fr. Abel Oghlukian visited the Eastern and the Canadian Dioceses and met with the respective Primates, as well as the clergy serving in these dioceses. As a result of these meetings, committees have been formed and projects are in formative stages. While in New York, Fr. Abel also met with Dn. Hratch Tchilingirian of A.C.R.A.G. and discussed the possible contributions of the Armenian Church Research and Analysis Group in the efforts of CPC. It was agreed that the current issue "Cults in Armenia" would be translated and printed for distribution in Armenia.

The Other Side of the Window

ACRAG sponsors Theological Conference in Los Angeles

A conference dealing with the theological implications of the Armenian Genocide was organized by the Armenian Church Research and Analysis Group, which was held on January 17, 1991, at the American Armenian International College, Tujunga facility.

First in its type, the conference brought together a group of scholars with the participation of an enthusiastic audience from the greater Los Angeles area. The conference was opened by the welcoming remarks of Fr. Vazken Movsesian of ACRAG.

The main speaker was Dr. Vigen Guroian of Loyola College, Maryland, who presented a paper entitled, "Genocide and Christian Existence: Theology after the Armenocide."

Dr. Guroian introduced the the subject and its rationale and made a juxtaposition of the Armenian Genocide with the Jewish Holocaust. The main thesis of his position centered on the Christology of the Armenian Church and its unique ability to deal with the theme of suffering and the Cross. The last section of Guroian's paper dealt with the issue of "Power and Powerlessness," and the "Theology of the Cross." In his conclusion, he said, "It has been the underlying thesis of this paper that the Armenocide and subsequent Armenian history beckon the Armenian Church to turn to a theology of the cross to heal the nation. A post-Armenocide theology requires a



reinterpretation of the Church's relationship to power—a shift in emphasis from a theology of glory to a theology of the cross — and a total participation in the lives of the suffering and afflicted, friend and stranger alike."

The first respondent, Dr. Donald E. Miller of USC, School of Religion, discussed the problem of evil in a general context and underlined the importance of understanding the Genocide from a religious point of view. He stated that, "Not only is the survival of the Armenian Church dependent on confronting the genocide of its people, but the whole of the Christian Church must offer a response to the human proclivity for evil. The Armenian people have much to offer to Christendom, because surely their history has been marked by more intense suffering than any nation of which I am aware." The second respondent Dn. Hratch Tchilingirian of Window, discussed the issue from an ecclesial point of view. In reference to the Armenian Church and Nation relationship, Dn. Tchilingirian pointed out that, "one of the problems in Armenian reality is the fact that church and nation relationship is taken for granted. The church is perceived as the 'principle stronghold of nationalism,' but there is no clear understanding nor a definition of what that means. Therefore, the historical as well as the contemporary implications of this relationship must be scrutinized in this light."

Following the responses, the moderator, Dr. R. Hrair Dekmejian of USC Dept. of Political Science, made some concluding remarks and conducted a lively discussion with the audience.



Conference participants: (l. to r) Dr. Donald Miller, Dn. Hratch Tchilingirian, Dr. Vigen Guroian, Dr. Hrair Dekmejian, Fr. Vazken Movsesian.

Letters

Is the Collar Choking the Armenian Priest?

Our look at the Armenian clergy in the Fall 1990 issue of *Window* provoked a wide variety of responses from our readers.

Dear Editors:

Like all your articles in this and previous *Window* publications, I enthusiastically read the article about "Wounded in the Jungle" — an interview with an ex-Armenian priest (Fall 1990). I found most of its content very honest, factual, and sincere. However, I was disturbed by the ex-priest's advice to young person contemplating a vocation in the priesthood.

I feel that the ex-priest has underestimated the spiritual strength, faith and honesty of Armenian girls in general by stating, "you cannot find an Armenian girl who will get married with an Armenian priest, with such a spirit and honesty," and goes on to say, "which Armenian girl in her right mind will do this?" He has portrayed them as materialistic, of this earth, and disastrous to a priest's vocation. It is unfortunate that the ex-priest and his friends have only known of such women, but I feel his answer sends a wrong message to our young people who are contemplating priesthood and marriage in their future plans; especially now when our churches are in desperate need of qualified priest. There are many Armenian girls who have strong spiritual faith and commitment and would feel blessed to marry God loving Armenian men who are planning for the priesthood; these girls are eager to serve the Lord as wives to the best of their abilities.

I am also disappointed that the ex-priest failed to mention the wonderful Yeretzijs who have enhanced their husbands' calling and responsibilities, and who in loving and effective ways have contributed to the spiritual growth of the parishes they have served alongside their husbands.

—Diane Keutelian
Milwaukee, WI



Dear Editors:

Your fall issue qualifies *Window* as required reading for every Armenian who has the least bit of interest in the future of our church and our people. In "Beneath the Collar" Fr. Vazken Movsesian uses a laser beam to dispel myths

that have shrouded the true role of the Armenian priest.

Dn. Hratch Tchilingirian goes a step further by clarifying some of the advantages available for the Armenian Church in the political arena in his hard-hitting article "Where Does the Buck Stop?"

Window definitely is shedding a bright light on issues that have been in the shadows too long.

—Charles R. Nazarian
Executive Editor

Armenian International Magazine

Dear Editors,

Knowing the shortage and the burdens of a clergyman in the Armenian Church, I pray to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ often that He may nourish the seed in our young people so that they will want to serve our Holy Church. This is the number one crisis in our church and has been for years. We have strived for qualitative perfection, not quantitative success. But we have been struggling to motivate our people and to improve their perception of the priesthood in general. It is in fact a noble profession, as I know how rewarding it must be to baptize a baby, to anoint the body with Holy Chrism, to officiate at wedding ceremonies, to minister to the flock, to soothe the sick and nourish the souls of those who are forlorn. To do all of these in the name of God is the pinnacle of love. The level of parish priest in the hierarchical structure — the bastion of interaction with the worshipers — has to be a holy mission. This is not to say that the ascetic principles of

our monks should be overlooked. Christ knew self-deprivation. He inspired us by His example.

As for those who think they are not worthy to be a priest in the service of our Lord, I ask the following question? Who is worthy? As St. Paul reminds us, "If then you have been with Christ, seek the things that are above where Christ is," (Col. 3:11). Wherever Christ is, we have the right to be. Christ is embodied in the Church. How can one not be inspired by the words of the prophets and saints and of the Virgin Mary? Especially, when Christ enables us not only to savor the ephemeral, but also permits us to touch viable, hungry human beings, who are silently crying for help. What an honorable vocation — the priesthood!!!

—Carl Zeytoonian
Pensacola, FL

Dear Editors:

I would like to commend you for publishing the *Window* and wish you success in this very important mission that you have undertaken for the benefit of the Armenian Church.

—Bishop Mesrob Mutaflan
Istanbul, Turkey

I have received your quarterly magazine with great appreciation and found myself in front of a happy reality. I have read your inspiring articles with seriousness and gladness. You have truly opened a new *Window* in our church. In your future issues, I wish to see articles concerning marriage and family matters that is needed in our church.

Wishing you success in your endeavors,

—Fr. Pree Metjian
Wynnwood, PA

Your publication is unique in the Armenian Diaspora — well written, well reasoned and always to the point. Keep up the good work.

—J. Bezazian
Fresno, CA

Dear Friends at "The Group":

I first saw *Window* last summer, and was absolutely thrilled to see

LETTERS (continued)

quotes from James Cone, Leonardo Boff, and Gustavo Gutierrez in a publication about the Armenian Church. Raised in a New England parish, I grew disillusioned at a young age with the emphasis on culture and language preservation. Like many, I hear much about being Armenian and little about being a Christian. My faith has developed largely within small alternative Catholic communities that emphasize social justice, lay participation, and equality between the sexes within the framework of weekly Eucharistic liturgies.

After an eight year absence, I felt called to explore the Armenian Church again last summer... The next six months were wonderful, as I rediscovered God in a tradition I'd long ago given up on...

The fact *Window* is being published is in itself a sign of hope. If change is to come at all, it will come as in Latin America and South Africa, from the bottom up. Your journal is playing a vital role in showing the way and I hope there could be other forums to bring people together to share our concerns and hopes for the church.

Lastly, is an item of deep person concern to me. The Armenian Church must confront the limited roles to which it has relegated women. By officially discouraging and forbidding women from serving at the altar in any capacity, the Church is denying its own history, and itself of the spiritual gifts of half its members. The issue of women in the church needs to be discussed, and leaders confronted. The pages of *Window* are an ideal forum to bring this concern to the open.

While in California, I worked for a non-profit agency that provided housing and community services in a low-income Black community. We frequently used the following quote from Dom Helder Camara, "If we dream alone, the dream remains a dream. If we dream together the dream becomes reality."

Let's get all the dreamers together and make the Armenian Church a voice of Christian love, hope, justice and action in our world.

—Beatrice Trapasso
Houston, TX

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For further reading on cults, we recommend the following books:
 Larson, Ken. *Book of Cults*. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1985.
 Larson, Ken. *Strange Cults in America*. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1986.

MacCollam, Joel A. *Carnival of Souls*. New York, New York: The Seabury Press, 1979.

YOURS FOR THE ASKING:

The Christian Research Institute (CRI) is a clearing house for current, in-depth information on new religious movements and aberrant Christian teachings. CRI provides well-reasoned, carefully researched answers to concepts that challenge orthodox Christianity. Write: CRI, P.O. Box 500, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92693.

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Electronic versions of *Window* are available free of charge on the S*A*I*N* system. Past issues of *Window* are archived on this electronic bulletin board. S*A*I*N* is accessed with a computer and modem. Set software to 8-N-1 and dial 1.408.257.1846.

While on-line, mail may be left for ACIRAG. Users are invited to join discussion about the Armenian Church and nation. For assistance in setting up your computer and connecting to SAIN or for more information, contact Roupen Nahabedian 24hrs/day at 1-415-940-2548.

ACIRAG

The Armenian Church Research and Analysis 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 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.

In 1990 ACIRAG began publishing the *Window* quarterly. Within a year, *Window* has become the premium journal of contemporary Armenian Church thought.

Among its accomplishments during its short history was the production of the "Teotig" data base. Compiled in this file are names of over 1000 Armenian clergymen who were martyred during the Genocide of 1915. (Results of this study can be found in *Window* vol. I, No. 3.)

ACIRAG has been expanding its service to the community by organizing theological conferences and discussions. Information pamphlets have been produced for the immigrant Armenian communities in America. The Group has also supplied technical advise to various parishes in developing church computer systems.

In the field of telecommunications, ACIRAG is the voice of the Armenian Church on the international network, now covering the Soviet Union and Armenia.

As part of ACIRAG's developing scope and service there will be an opening for a Director of Operations at the ACIRAG headquarters. The director will function directly under the ACIRAG advisory board and will be responsible for development of specific programs. Fluency in Armenian, English and computer skills are mandatory. Send resumé to ACIRAG.



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