

wind^owTM

WINDOW VIEW OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH



DEATH

The Keyvorkian Factor

Window

view of the Armenian Church

Volume III Number 3 & 4 — 1993

Death: One More Pain to Avoid? 3

by Vazken Movsesian

What is Good Death? 7

by Hratch Tchilingirian

Medicine & Spirituality 10

by Gregory Semerdjian

Reflections on the Canon of Funeral 12

by George A. Leylegian

The Final Act 18

by Gregory Doudoukjian

Death of an AIDS Victim 20

by Tateos Abdalian

The Boy Who Sang the Psalms 21

by Vazken Movsesian

Toward a Theology of Science 23

by Richard Kirby

Letters 28



PUBLISHER:
THE ARMENIAN CHURCH
RESEARCH & ANALYSIS
GROUP

EDITORS:
FR VAZKEN MOVSESIAN
DN HRATCH TCHILINGIRIAN

ART DIRECTOR:
YN SUSAN MOVSESIAN

DISTRIBUTIONS:
ALICE ATAMIAN

LIAISON:
DN MICHAEL FINDIKYAN
ABRAHAM SLDRIAN

PHOTOGRAPHY:
BRUCE BURR

TELECOMM:
ROUPEN NAHABEDIAN

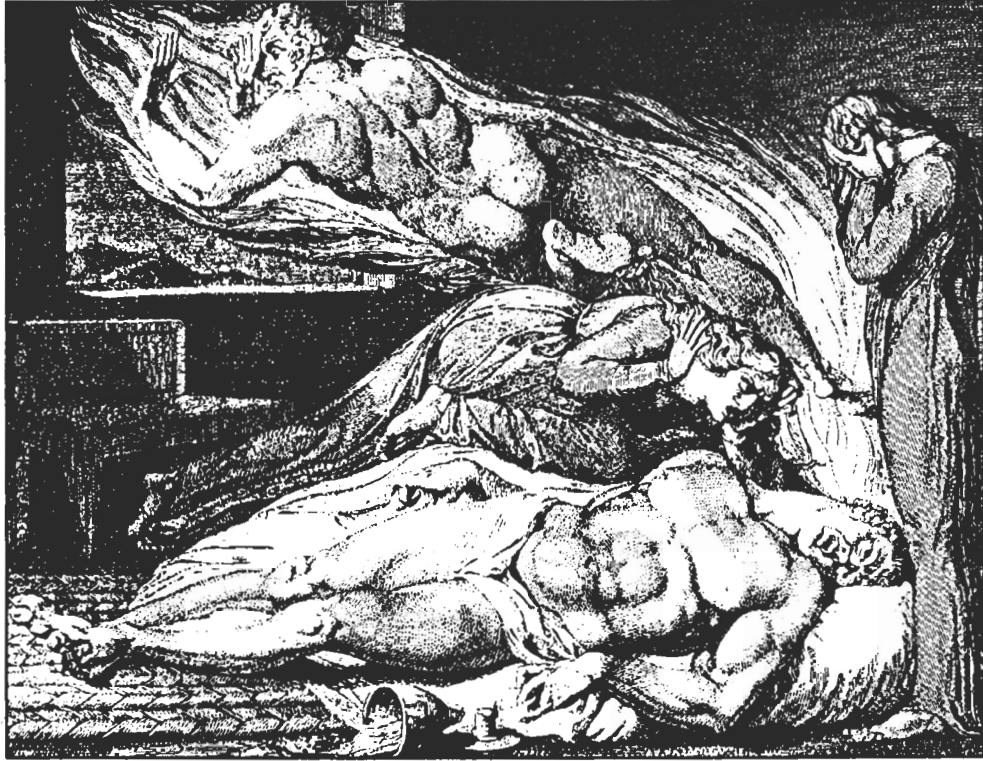
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSIST.:
SOSI TOPJIAN

LAYOUT & LOGISTICS:
SRP

The views expressed in Window are not necessarily those of the Armenian Church hierarchy. Window is known as Loosamood in Armenia. Window is an independent publication supported solely by reader subscriptions. Entire contents © 1993 ACRA Group. All rights reserved. Use of original articles, translations, art work or photographs without the expressed permission of the publisher is strictly prohibited by law. All manuscripts submitted for publication become the property of ACRA Group. Subscription information: Send name, address and \$22.00 for each subscription to: ACRA Group, P.O. Box 700664, San Jose, CA 95170. An electronic version of Window is available on the St. Andrew Information Network (SAIN) System: 1-408-257-1846 or via the internet at acrag@sain.org. Address all correspondence to: The ACRA Group. Window is produced on a Macintosh/Apple II system and LaserJet on a LaserWriter II, utilizing the ITC Bookman and ITC Avant Garde fonts. Some of the material used is compiled and prepared utilizing the SAIN electronic forum. Printed in the United States of America by ACRA Group Publishing. Window and the logo appearing on the cover are trademarks of ACRA Group. Macintosh, Apple II and LaserWriter are registered trademarks of Apple Computer.

© 1993 A.C.R.A. Group
P.O. Box 700664,
San Jose, CA 95170

DEATH: ♦



ONE MORE PAIN TO AVOID?

Fr. Vazken Movsesian

W

hen we first decided to focus this issue of *Window* on death, Dr. Jack Kevorkian was still causing people to pause from their fast paced lives and contemplate their own mortality. By now, Kevorkian is dismissed as merely a doctor unfaithful to his calling, carrying the misleading title "Doctor Death." He continues to buck the system, defying court orders and accepting jail sentences. Every now and then his name finds a spot in the Armenian Church bulletins and pulpits by priests more captured by his being Armenian, than the ethical dilemma he may present.

Kevorkian is a rebel and as such is a working man's hero. He is a genuine person, evaluating problems of life and death in a down-to-earth manner. If someone is dying without any hope of recovery, why add to the terrible hand that life has dealt him? Why not assist and make his exit from this life as quick and painless as possible? What could be more practical? Wouldn't it be nice if every problem in life could have such a pragmatic solution?

The dilemma which Kevorkian has brought to the limelight intrigues our society — a society which places all its eggs in one basket. Material wealth and the belief in the finality of our temporal

existence defines our understanding of life. Kevorkian rocks the shaky foundation which society has built. The ramifications of Kevorkian's challenge to societal ethics is inescapable, especially for us in the Church.

After reading Kevorkian's book, *Prescription Medicine: The Goodness of Planned Death*, it becomes obvious that the title "Dr. Death" is only a ploy by the media to sensationalize a society which is scared to deal with ultimate questions. Dr. Kevorkian is no more an advocate of death than Mother Teresa. What differentiates Kevorkian from all the rest is his willingness to apply intellect and reason to a very important issue facing society today — the boundaries of and control over life and death.

Death and Society

"...The chief duty of the state [is] to protect the individual and give him the opportunity

to develop into a creative personality; that is to say; the state should be our servant and not we its slaves."

ALBERT EINSTEIN

The first time I received a letter from Armenia, I was amused at the way the address had been written. It had "USA" at the top, followed by my state, city, street address and at the very bottom was my name. It was the opposite of the way we address envelopes here in the U.S. — with the person's name at the top, followed by his location in the world. It may be merely a matter of custom, but it does reflect the understanding of a self-conscious society. For much of the world, the state is what comes before all else. The state is greater than all else and is there to be served. However, in America (and the Western world), the self has been allowed to supercede all else. Though this ideal may not be achievable, the state is there to serve the person.

In the hierarchy of life, we have put our personal existence above all else. Advances in the field of medicine are steadily stretching life expectancy years. Add to this the doctor's fear of malpractice litigation and you have a unique system — where every and all measures may be taken to preserve a person's physical existence — despite the quality of life that treatment may render. The primordial question of life and its meaning follow when the quality of life issue is brought to focus. What is the value of existence without purpose or plan? What is existence without a measure of quality?

With subjective references as "quality," the definition and meaning of life becomes a confusing mish-mash of capitalistic and humanistic idealism. The popular slogan, *In the end, he who dies with the most toys, wins!* characterizes a society where material wealth and accumulation of goods define the quality of life.

Modern medicine is opening



Jack Kevorkian: *"Prescription: Medicine: The Goodness of Planned Death"*; Prometheus Books 1991, New York.

"Even the various gods invented by humankind to help face the terrifying unknowns of existence are in favor of the ultimate penalty. They not only mandate it but they even pass the death sentence on capitally sinful mortals, and serve as its executioners. Yahweh and Allah have condemned and executed millions guilty of the capital crime of lacking faith. The true believers may have been the sword, but the gods were the executioners who wielded it. In fact, they are still swinging it wildly in Lebanon, Iran, Ireland and India."

"The 'pendulum' of capital punishment is unstoppable. Its use has fluctuated throughout recorded history, and there is not an interval of peacetime during which it completely disappeared. That is potent, indeed invincible, evidence that the practice probably emanates from the very core of the human psyche and will never be eradicated."

"Capital punishment can have only two definite and absolutely inarguable aims. The first is simply to put an end to a criminal's earthly existence. The second is to prevent repetition of crime by the individual thus eliminated."

a Pandora's box every day. The longer life expectancy is stretched, the more chances a person has to see the next generation of illness and disease. In *Prescription Medicine*, Kevorkian addresses issues that are paramount to our ability to control, regulate and limit life. For the ethicist, these are questions which are evaluated in relation to the norms of society. For the theologian, these are concerns which are tested against an understanding of a supernatural force — the author of life — and therefore the only legitimate "regulator" of life.

"Prescription Medicine"

Society has already made a decision on which life is insignificant by virtue of its capital punishment laws, contends Kevorkian. *Prescription Medicine* expounds his idea of "judicial euthanasia." The book begins by portraying a handful of individuals with life threatening diseases and the possibility for survival, provided they can obtain a donated or-

gan. Simultaneously, Kevorkian details a state sanctioned execution: when a criminal is executed by the state, "an abstraction called justice [is] served...." At the same time a greater sentence is handed down to those suffering from illness. By the extermination of the criminal, a cure for the ails of another becomes impossible.

Kevorkian's premise is simple and rational. Given the set of circumstances produced by society, we can find a more equitable way of "serving justice." He explains, "Originally the word retribution meant compensation or something of value given in return. How can the involuntary death of a criminal fit that definition? What is returned to society or to anyone in it? There can be no compensation from executions as traditionally understood; there can be only loss of life."

Criminals sitting on death row are a source for organ transplants as well as medical experimen-

tation. Kevorkian interviews a handful of these inmates and finds that they are willing to "pay their debt" to society in this manner. What stops them, however, is the politics of medicine. For one, the American Medical Association cannot sanction a doctor to play executioner. The greater problem is faced by law makers who have to face voters on a record blotched with the word "murder."

Clearly, Kevorkian shows there is precedence for this type of planned execution. He dedicates *Prescription Medicine* "to those enlightened doctors in ancient Hellenistic Alexandria and Medieval Cilician Armenia. They dared to do what is right." He explains, "Articles published recently in academic journals from Soviet Armenia... cited publications in the classical Armenian language from around 1350 to 1375 describing the practice (medical experiments during execution of condemned criminals) then in vogue. They also tended to verify what I had

"It was the condemnation of suicide by Augustine (354-430) that was the single most important factor in setting the face of the Christian church firmly against acts of self killing.... it was his City of God which for the first time forcefully brought suicide as a moral issue to the attention of the Christian community and established the subsequent prevailing attitude toward it — that suicide is self-murder and deserving of the same strong condemnation that we normally reserve for murder itself.

"... For by demonstrating the immorality of suicide, he could defend the Christian preference for Job— who suffered long and much but clung to life and trusted God — over Cato the Younger, the highly respected and principled opponent of Julius Caesar who took his own life when the latter came to power.

"Suicide — worse than murder for Augustine, because it leaves no room for a "healing penitence". Murderers can at least repent and restore their relationship with God, but for suicides this possibility is precluded, so they enter eternity in an unforgiven condition."

"Why indeed, should we submit, beast-like, to nature's capricious ways, being obliged to allow an agonizing dying to proceed at its own slow rate? Why not place dying fully under human control and judgment? This, the argument goes, would not mean ending life on a whim or doing so without moral scruples, but it would mean being open to the moral possibility of taking active steps to end life. To be sure, certain stringent conditions would have to be met, and tough questions would have to be asked. For example, is my situation hopeless and known to be such? Have I been faithful in discharging my responsibilities to preserve my life, including the bearing of appropriately heavy burdens? However, has the burden of my suffering now become intolerable, with nothing but an agonizing, sputtering death (dying) lying ahead for me? Should the answer to all these questions be "yes," could I not throw myself on the mercy of God and end my life? Why not show that we respect the divine lordship over death not by letting nature have its way in these matters but by seeking to make dying captive to values expressive of God's nature — love, mercy, compassion, the best interests of all concerned, and so on?"

Robert Wennberg, *Terminal Choices: Euthanasia, Suicide and the Right to Die*.
Grand Rapids: Willam Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989.

guessed about Alexandria: experiments were performed there only after subjects were rendered insensitive with large amounts of alcohol. Much of the Armenian research dealt with observation of organ structure and function, including circulation of the blood. This then represents the second and well-documented episode of man's homage to the nobler and usually ignored values inherent in the willful destruction of humans."

The benefits of this "judicial euthanasia" are great, Kevorkian contends. Cures for illness based on human experimentation and organ transplants are possible, but societal rules and regulations now stand in the way of progress.

Enter the Church

For the Church, the issues that are presented by Kevorkian's work can not go unnoticed. And certainly, for the Armenian Church, Kevorkian must stand as a challenge to Her theology because of his work and not because of his ethnic background. (I often wonder, had he not been Armenian, would we in the Armenian Church have even picked up on this controversy. Everyday we are challenged with issues of euthanasia, capital punishment, suicide, abortion and our inhumanity to one another in war. Rarely, do I hear our Church make mention of these ethical dilemmas.)

For the Church, doctor assisted suicide cannot be approached vis-à-vis the political debate, nor does it necessarily have to be an ethical debate. Life is precious, granted. We may certainly ask, who has the right to take that life away? But we must also ask the question, who has the right to extend it? Because our theology discounts fatalism, (despite the popularity of the Middle Eastern custom of coffee cup reading), we accept a model of self-determination.

The ramifications of self determination are many and can be debated endlessly. But the living Church must rise above mundane and lifeless philosophical discussions. The Church has a statement to make and must be heard beyond the discussion of physical expiration. Today, the Church can speak in such a language that no other secular institution can speak and pronounce a message equally distinctive and unique.

The basic foundation of the Church is built upon the Resurrec-

tion of Jesus Christ. There can be no concessions made on acceptance of this event by the "Christian." It is the premise of our Faith. Therefore, physical death is no longer a mystery nor is it a pain to be avoided. We cannot "treat" death as we do a disease. It is a natural process through which every living entity must pass. The Church is bound to witness to the message of the resurrection, which heralds, "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (1 Cor. 15:55)

The "pain" of death is found only in the grieving of those who remain with memories of the deceased. By the unfailing words of Christ, we are partakers in His resurrection. If not for Her witness to the Resurrection, the Church is but one voice among many in a controversy which began when Adam first questioned his existence and will continue to the end of time.

In witnessing to the resurrection, the Church has a ministry in and through the event unparalleled in human history - Christ's Resurrection. It is the strength by which we change the focus of death to life. In so doing, the message of the Church becomes one of life *in light of death*.

Society is dying daily as it denies death and places the self above all else. It leads consumers in a futile search for a better look, a better feeling, a better life, all at the cost of one's spiritual demise. As victims of societal pressure, our lives lose meaning and purpose, because our labors are in vain. Death is seen as the ultimate evil, to be avoided at all costs, while life is defined by the expressions of what we taste, hear, smell, see and feel.

Society is overrun by self-centered idealism. Quite the opposite, the Church teaches and challenges the individual to a life of sacrifice, even to the point of death, for the good of others. The life of the Christian is one of love. That love is expressed in giving. Life is meant to be given as freely as it is given to us by God. The idea that life is to be preserved at all costs is a foreign concept to the Church. Without limits, life would not be faithful to its own definition.

In witnessing to the resurrection, the Church first and foremost must rise out of the grave Herself. Death is a done deal. It has been

conquered. It needs no apology. The Church must be willing to address the issues of life. The resurrection of Christ was not only an event in history, but also an event that happens every moment in a Christian's life. The spiritual death we face daily digs us deeper and deeper into a grave from which the Church must lift us up. The Church is not the mortician which pumps us with embalming fluid to simulate a life-like state, rather She is the voice which echoes Christ's shout to Lazarus to "come forth" and *live today!* With the message of the resurrection, the walls of death crumble and we walk from darkness into light, from spiritual decay into spiritual revival.

In his book *The Courage to Be*, theologian Paul Tillich describes the types of "anxiety," one of which is the "anxiety of guilt." He explains, "Man's being, ontic as well as spiritual, is not only given to him but also demanded of him. He is responsible for it; literally, he is required to answer, if he is asked, what he has made of himself. He who asks him is his judge, namely he himself, who, at the same time, stands against him." We succumb to the anxiety of guilt, as our lives turn inward and decay in a battle to inflate the ego with surplus garbage. We all fall victim to a spiritual demise. We need the hand that will pull us out of this grave and will allow us to believe that our efforts and labors are not in vain.

The Church has this as Her mission. When the Church is defined as the Kingdom of God on Earth, what more is this than to allow Her children to share in God's love during their temporal existence. The power of the Church is in her ability to talk to the lives of mortals here on Earth, with the authority and conviction of the Creator in Heaven, through the Holy Spirit. Our deeds are judged by the self, evaluating itself. The Church must move its emphasis away from a judgment yet to come to a judgment which is here today. In so doing, the Church's message of love overshadows and overcomes all discussion and concern for death.

Death happens in the here and now. It is not to come, but an event from which we need to be saved today. Death is the end feared by those whose lives have been lived in vain. Lives lived in love and out of love do not die. ♣



WHAT IS

GOOD

DEATH?

ISSUES RELATED TO DEATH AND DYING

Hratch Tchilingirian

Euthanasia (Greek for “good death”), in general, means “the causing of an easy or painless death to the patient who is dying of a terminal illness. Death can be induced by the patient himself without the knowledge and cooperation of any other persons. Or it can be effected by others at the request or with the consent of the patient. In all these cases it is called *voluntary euthanasia*. If death is induced against the will or without the knowledge of the patient, [it is called] *involuntary euthanasia*.¹

In 1991 when the Hemlock Society published the best seller *Final Exit* by Derek Humphry, a wave of controversies and debates emerged and once again, *euthanasia* became a topic of public discussion. Meanwhile, an *Armenian* doctor in Michigan, named Jack Kevorkian, was assisting terminally ill or potentially terminal patients to commit suicide. Kevorkian became “famous” in 1990 when he chose to help Janet Adkins commit suicide in the early stages of her Alzheimer’s disease. In the beginning, “despite some criticism by a few psychologists and ethicists, there was tremendous public support evidenced for his compassion,”² Humphry writes. However, as the number of his assisted suicides increased, Kevorkian’s “public support” turned into public outrage.

Why did this initial support decline to an eventual disapproval? Kevorkian – or Dr. Death as he became known in the press – was acting “as god” in the eyes of society, i.e.,

determining the end of life or when life should end "for the sake of his patients." While the initial cases of assisted suicides by Kevorkian were seen as compassionate relief from ongoing physical pain and discomfort, eventually, his method became a major public issue when it went "too far." As Nancy Gibbs in her cover story in *Time* magazine wrote, Kevorkian, in his determination to fight for the rights of his patients, told the State of Michigan "to go to hell."³ By placing himself above any authority except the will of the dying person, Kevorkian negated the basic ethical questions surrounding life and death. He was satisfied with his own answer.

The Social Debate

Questions such as whether an individual has the "right to die" or whether life should be prolonged or whether life should be ended to prevent pain are discerned through social *dialogue*, where the social, moral, political, philosophical and theological implications of such issues are discussed on various levels. Who decides the length of life? Who determines the value of life? What is death? Is it a matter of personal choice? What is the responsibility of society? In a pluralistic society such as ours, when faced with these complicated ethical questions, we find ourselves divided over the fundamentals of life and death.

The ethical and theological problem over death and dying is further complicated today by the fact that modern medicine and clinical technology has succeeded in prolonging the life span of human beings - whether by stretching out the length of an illness or using artificial means of sustenance. Today, *euthanasia* is discussed within the context of this social dilemma. While on the one hand technology has made many miracles possible, it has also legitimized the illusion that "man is the center of the universe" and therefore controls his own destiny. On the contrary, as Michail Gorbachev underlines, "technology has not only failed to ease the conflict between man and nature, it has aggravated that conflict.... The crisis of civilization that we see today is a crisis of the naive belief in the omnipotence of humanity."⁴

Technological advances without corresponding moral discussion and determination create an ethical vacuum in society. Obviously, many resort to euthanasia out of fear of machines and hospitals where human beings are treated as "lab subjects." The medical *industry* has not clarified its boundaries and the parameters of its function in society. As such, the gap in the trust between patients and doctors has increasingly grown wider.

What is Death?

Biologically, the death of any living organism is viewed as the "inevitable and critical moment when an organism ceases to function as a specific, unified, homeostatic system and becomes disorganized into a mere collection of heterogeneous chemical substance." The process of death is the tangible unraveling of the biological system; death is the cessation of systemic functioning. "Hence, the essential point about determining human death is not to decide whether *any* life is present, but whether *human* life in the most radical sense of a unified human person is still present."⁵ And yet, who determines whether this "unified person" is present? Is it the doctor? Is it the patient? Is it the family? If the person is "not present," do we have the right to extinguish this life? When is life no longer of value? Today, in a market-driven society, human life is viewed from a materialist perspective and life is often valued for its productive capacity or for its adequacy to seek and experience pleasure. Thus death, while feared, is preferred over a non-productive or painful existence.

Nevertheless, unlike other organisms, "human death has a mystery about it, because at death we lose touch irrevocably with a person who previously was able to commu-

nicate and to share our human community of thought, of love, of freedom, and of creativity. Human death is not merely a decay of an organism, it is the departure of a member of the human community."⁶ It is this interdependence between the individual and the community that sets the "climate" of the dialogue concerning community and societal issues, e.g., euthanasia. On the other hand, in Western societies, the loss of a member of the human community is viewed as evil - "an evil which is resented, fought against and battled, even though it is seen as inevitable. Death is darkness. It is the end of life on earth as we know it. It is the conclusion of our efforts, our hopes, our dreams, our expectations, our existence as earth-borne beings."⁷

An Orthodox Perspective

Ultimately, any ethical position or contemplation in life takes place in a specific context. And that context is defined by one's religious belief or values by which she lives. A person's understanding of life is based on her values, her upbringing, her experience in life, her religious faith and practice and many other variables. As Armenian Christians, we have the rich theological tradition of the Armenian Church which defines that context.

The Armenian Church understands death in the context of life, i.e., dying and living in Christ. This understanding is reiterated throughout the liturgical tradition of the Armenian Church, (e.g., Baptism, Divine Liturgy, Funeral Service, etc.). In fact, in the New Testament "the dominant lines of [God's] revelation converge toward the mystery of Christ's death. There all of human history appears like some gigantic drama of life and death; until the coming of Christ, and without Him, there is only the kingdom of death. Christ comes, and by His death triumphs over death itself; from that instant, death takes on a new meaning for the new humanity which dies with Christ in order to live with Him eternally."⁸

In a broader sense, dying should be viewed as a *process* and death as an *event*. The Christian, through Baptism, dies in his "old life" and lives anew in Christ. The entire life



process is a process of "dying," and "reliving" in Christ through love in the Holy Spirit. Death, for the Christian, is merely the event by which one leaves *this* world to become a part of *another*. There may be pain and suffering in the process and that is understood through the purifying and salvific suffering of Christ.

According to the Armenian Church, suicide – i.e., those who separate or cut off themselves from the church community – constitutes the deliberate taking of human life and as such is to be condemned as murder.⁹ The Church, however, "distinguishes between euthanasia and the withholding of extraordinary means to prolong life unable to sustain itself. It affirms the sanctity of human life and man's God-given responsibility to preserve life. But it rejects an attitude which disregards the inevitability of physical death. The only "good death" for the Orthodox Christian is the peaceful acceptance of the end of his or her earthly life with faith and trust in God and the promise of Resurrection."¹⁰

Thus, the meaning of life is not determined by an individual's productivity, or her comfort or his pleasure or her desire to live, but by the individual's faith in God. Death is not an ending, but a beginning. Death is not a condition to be induced or avoided; it is the culmination of this life and the preparation of a new life in Christ. The circumstances of death are always difficult – for those who die, as well as those who remain behind – but ultimately, human life and condition are to be entrusted to God and His mercy. It is not a matter of personal control. As the Psalmist writes, "The Lord redeems the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in Him shall be desolate." (Ps. 34:22). ☩

¹Andrew C. Varga, *The Main Issues in Bioethics*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), pp. 267-68.

²Derek Humphry, *Final Exit: The Practicalities of Self-Deliverance and Assisted Suicide for the Dying*. (The Hemlock Society, 1991), p. 18.


³*Time*, May 31, 1993, p. 35.

⁴*Time*, September 6, 1993, p. 53. Mikhail Gorbachev is currently President of International Green Cross.

⁵*ibid.*, p. 366.

⁶Benedict M. Ashley and Kevin D. O'Rourke, *Health Care Ethics: A Theological Analysis*. (St. Louis: The Catholic Health Association of the United States, 1982), pp. 364-65.

New
Publication!



POINTS OF LIGHT

IN THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

Points of Light – Parables of Faith in the Everyday Experience of Armenian Priests. Edited by Hratch Tchilingirian. New Rochelle, NY: St. Nersess Armenian Seminary Press, 1993. 51 pages.

Most often the Armenian priest is seen primarily as a liturgical functionary on Sundays or as someone who is preoccupied with administrative duties in the parish. Contrary to these stereotypical characterizations, the recently published *Points of Light* records events and experiences in the life of the Armenian priest that challenge these perceptions.

This engaging book – a collection of fifteen pastoral vignettes – is a welcomed first publication in its genre. The simple, short and moving narrative of each priest leaves an endearing impact on the reader. Each story is a personal account of a real experience that the author shares with the reader in "an informal conversation."

As the forward of the book states, "many Armenians see the Church as a 'historical monument,' rather than the gathering or the assembly of God's people. Many Armenians are unaware of the Armenian Church where the Grace of the Holy Spirit is experienced in the small miracles and in the little incidents that occur on a daily basis in the lives of Armenian faithful." *Points of Light* gives the reader a glimpse of these miracles and establishes once again that true faith can only be expressed in a living praxis.

Copies of this book can be ordered from
St. Nersess Armenian Seminary
150 Stratton Road, New Rochelle, NY 10804. (914) 636-2003
(\$5 per copy).

⁷Stanley S. Harakas, *Contemporary Moral Issues Facing the Orthodox Christians*. (Minneapolis: Light and Life Publishing Co., 1982), p. 166.

⁸Xavier Léon-Dufour, *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*. (New York: The Seabury Press, 1973), p. 117.

⁹Canon 11 and 28 of St. Athanasius of

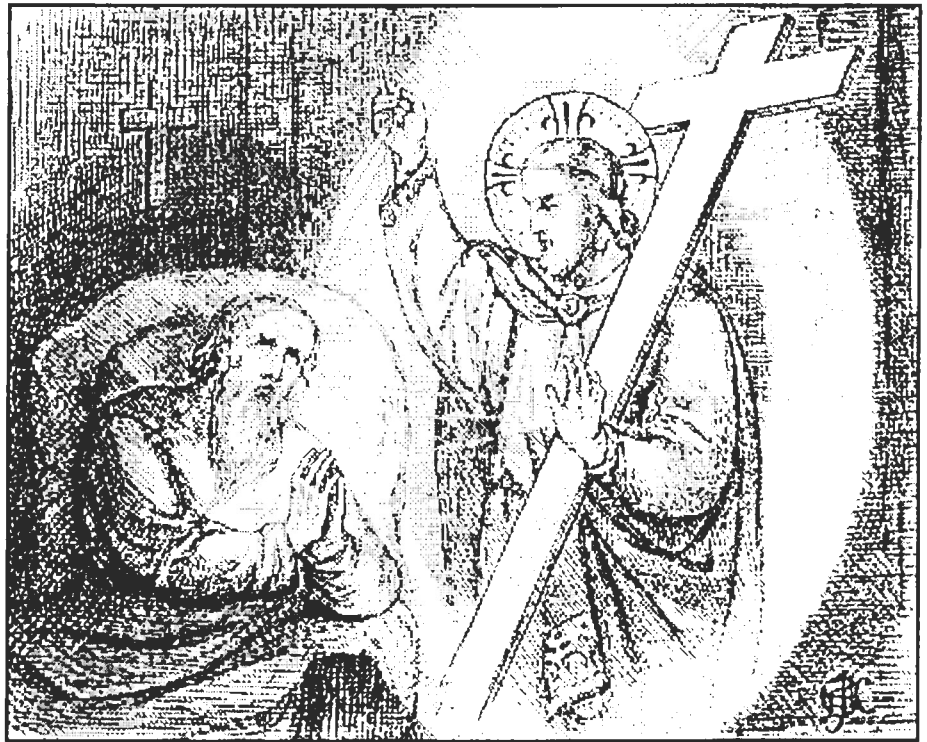
Alexandria. cf. *op. cit.* Harakas, p. 174. For other related canons of the Armenian Church see Vazken Hagopian, *Canon Book of Armenians* [in Armenian], Vol. I and II, (Yerevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences, 1964/1971).

¹⁰*op. cit.* Harakas, p. 176.

MEDICINE & SPIRITUALITY

Gregory Semerdjian, M.D.

Deacon Gregory Semerdjian, a doctor of medicine, presented a longer version of this article as a lecture during a Lenten service at the St. John Armenian Church, San Diego, California, where he serves as a deacon.



Webster's dictionary defines the word doctor as one who teaches and one who heals the sick. Jesus was the greatest of teachers and healers. Throughout his time on this earth he traveled the countryside preaching the word of God and healing the sick. As the word of his teaching and his healing power became widespread, people from all around would come to hear him and touch him so as to be relieved of their afflictions.

There are numerous examples of his healing abilities in the Gospels of Luke, Matthew and Mark. Luke was not one of the apostles. He was a physician who observed many of the works of Christ. He wrote his observations to Theophyllus stating, "... because I have carefully studied all

these matters from beginning. I thought it would be good to write an orderly account for you. I do this so that you will know the full truth about everything which you have been told." (Luke 1:1-4).

The entire Gospel according to Luke is an eyewitness account of the healing powers of Christ. In one story, Luke tells of a paralyzed man brought to Jesus after hearing of his healing power. There were so many people listening to Jesus that the man could not be brought in through the door. Wanting not to give up, the man's friends carried him to the roof of the house and lowered him through a hole directly in front of Jesus. Luke relates, "When he saw their faith, he said, 'Friend, your sins are forgiven you.' Then he told the man to pick up his bed and go home. At once the man did exactly that." (Luke 5:18f).

Elsewhere in the Gospel according to Luke it is written, "They came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those who were troubled by evil spirits also came and were healed. All the people tried to touch him, for power was going out

tific knowledge of medicine many times over. Our knowledge of the working of the human body are so much more advanced than a few years ago. The advancement of technology has been explosive. We have developed tests, x-rays and procedures which several years ago would have been thought to be impossible. We have a new machine which can examine the function of the brain and pinpoint any diseased areas (PET Scanner). We can scan with new non-x-ray emitting machines any part of the body and pick up even the smallest of diseased tissues. We have developed techniques in heart disease treatments where we can remove blockages in arteries without surgery. We have perfected techniques that have increased the life expectancy on the average to 78 years. Twenty years ago life expectancy was 63 years. Unfortunately, all this technological development has come at a price.

THE PHYSICIANS' OATH

In ancient Greece in the time of Hippocrates, physicians made an

years to the point where there are millions of people in the United States that can not afford care. The price for profit from the manufacturers of drugs and medical equipment has escalated costs. Medicine has become a multibillion dollar business. Because of the technological advances people are living longer and utilizing greater services than ever before which has placed a strain on financial resources.

We are now hearing about the medical *haves* and the *have nots*. There is talk of rationing of medical care because there is not enough resources to cover the increasing need for care. For example, the State of Oregon has developed a rationing program for their population. Officials are categorizing and prioritizing disease states and are assigning dollar figures for each case. As such, medical attention and service to a particular patient is determined on where his diagnosis is placed on the priority list. For example a cardiac bypass surgery for an 80 year old will not be funded.

Ethicists across the board are debating the questions of dignity in death and birth. They ask the question, "Isn't death a natural extension of life?" If it is, "How long do we keep an individual alive by using the technological advances and artificial means?" We can now keep babies born in the 24th week of gestation alive by artificial means, when 5 years ago those babies would have died. They suffer from great many ailments that continue into their lives as they grow, which will make them totally dependent on others for their daily care.

EPIDEMIC OF AIDS

We are in the throes of an epidemic of AIDS which will further tax our financial resources. There are estimates that a new AIDS case is diagnosed every 17 minutes. There is an epidemic of lung cancer especially in those who smoke. The rate of alcoholism is on the increase. Is society responsible for the self destructive habits of individuals? If so at what price? It is estimated that we spend over \$100,000 in the last year of a persons life. When is enough, enough?

There are no easy answers to these questions. Perhaps one solu-
continued on page 14

Is society responsible for the self destructive habits of individuals? If so at what price?

from him and healing them all."

What power did Jesus offer these people and what did he expect from them? The power was that of FAITH. He said over and over again that those who believed in his word would be free from the demons of disease. Those who had faith would have a place in the kingdom of God.

From the time of Christ until today, we have advanced our scien-

oath and I quote, "I will prescribe regimen for the good of my patients according to my ability and my judgment and never do harm to anyone." The oath not only speaks to moral decisions but to the entire life of a physicians. Over the years I am sad to say the societal illness of greed and materialism has infiltrated the medical profession. The cost of medical care has increased in the last 20

REFLECTIONS ON THE CANON OF FUNERAL

George A. Lylegian



*"Brethren, I do not wish that you would be ignorant with regard to those who have fallen asleep because you should not be despondent like the others for whom hope does not exist."
(1 Thessalonians 4:13)*

Hope of Resurrection. This theme pervades every liturgical response of the Church towards death. The funeral rites of the Armenian Church are based upon four Biblical teachings: a) that humankind was fashioned out of the earth by God the Almighty Creator; b) that humankind transgressed the first commandment not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and was expelled from Paradise before eating from the tree of immortality; c) that humankind, in spite of its sins and transgressions, was not forgotten, and that One Person of the Holy Trinity, God the Son, Jesus Christ, descended to the earth to suffer for our sins; and d) that Jesus Christ shall come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, offering the hope of resurrection to the just but the unquenchable fires of condemnation for those judged unworthy.

Similarly, the liturgy of the Armenian funeral rite consist of four main services: a) the Service of the Household; b) the service at the church; c) the intern-

Deacon George A. Lylegian is an investment manager in the San Francisco Bay Area. He holds a Masters degree in Business and a Masters degree in Theology.

ment of the body; d) the sealing of the tomb in the expectation of the Second Coming. In this article, I shall provide an overview of both the liturgy and the theology of an Armenian funeral. In order to do so, we must first and always turn our attention to the rich Scriptural basis of our funeral services.

At the Creation, God formed humankind out of the dust of the earth, and breathed the Breath of Life into humankind's nostrils (Genesis 2:7). In Hebrew, the word for "breath" and the word for "soul" share the same root: "RWH" or "RuWah"; this same "RuWah" is used to describe the Holy Spirit of God. Which is to say, that when humankind was fashioned out of the dusty ground, the Life-giving Holy Spirit (in Armenian, *Gensadoo Soorp Hokin*) was transferred through the breath of God into mortal flesh and is to abide there until such time that God, figuratively, "inhales" that breath back from humankind. So, in Armenian, we use the expression, *Hokis hanetsin*, which is to say, "They took away my soul, my spirit, my breath, my life."

After Adam and Eve transgressed against God, the Creator's commandment, He expelled them out of Paradise, saying, "For dust you were, and to the dust you shall return." (Genesis 32:19). The mortality of humankind, therefore, involves the return of the body formed out of the earth back to the earth. Accordingly, the Church has always taught us that we enter this earthly life and we exit from this earthly life in the same manner. Until recent times, coffins were not used by Armenians. Instead, the corpse was washed, embalmed and wrapped naked in a shroud. The shrouded, naked corpse was transported to the cemetery on a pall, and was then interred into the earth without any container. As a result, the Church maintains that a person comes into this world naked and is severed from the mother's umbilical cord and is wrapped in swaddling clothes. Similarly, when a person exits from this world, the person is naked, severed from the spiritual umbilical cord of family, friends and society and is wrapped in a shroud.

In a person's life on this earth the Church fulfills a very special mission; each of us is a sojourner, *ookhdavor* in Armenian, a pilgrim. The pilgrimage of earthly life is called

bantukhdootyoon and refers to our living as pilgrims on a daily journey through our faith. The Church sets the course of our sojourn and provides us with the essential spiritual needs of our life-long pilgrimage. We pray in the Church saying, "O lord, direct our goings toward the ways of peace. O Lord, direct and lead our souls and the souls of all of the faithful to go upon the path of righteousness and into everlasting life" (a Bidding Prayer from the Armenian Book of Hours). Many of us are familiar with the traditional pilgrimages to Jerusalem and the Holy Land. These are geographic destinations for those who are fortunate enough to withstand the perils of the voyage. However, spiritually, the Church prepares us for our pilgrimage not toward the crumbling walls of earthly Jerusalem, but the Upper Jerusalem, the Jerusalem which is to come, in Armenian *Verin Yeroosaghen*, (Revelation 21). Many times the path which we follow is not always clear of obstacles, some of them are caused by Satan, others are the result of our own transgressions. In both cases, the divergence leads to sin, *meghk* in Armenian. In the funeral rite, the Church asks, "For what person is there who shall live and shall not sin?" This is human nature and even God recognized this mortal flaw following the Great Flood (Genesis 8:21).

As Armenian Christians, we believe and profess that Jesus Christ descended from heaven, was made incarnate and became a perfect human being (perfect God and perfect man as we profess in the Creed). He is perfect because He alone has no sin. Through His ministry Christ offered us the unique opportunity to mend our ways, to turn from our sins, to repent, to acknowledge our transgression, to reconcile with God and our fellow man and to be redeemed by faith and good works.

The prayers of our funeral service reflect and emphasize the judgment of all souls. This judgment is based upon the person's commitment to our Lord's call to good works, good words, and good thoughts while on this earth. "For the time will come when all who are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they shall come up out — those who have performed good works shall come to the resurrection of life, but those who have done evil shall come

to the resurrection of judgments," (John 5:29). Recognizing the fact that human beings are bound to sin, the Church prays that all-powerful, all-knowing, all-merciful, all-righteous God the Judge may render the just verdict, weighing the seen and unseen actions of each person.

The Liturgy of the Repose of Souls

Turning now to the actual rites and services, let us examine the setting and Scriptural content of each. When a person "falls asleep" at the end of life, the family (which, for Armenians includes not only blood relations but in fact the entire community) gathers at the home of the deceased. The body is washed, wrapped and shrouded, leaving the face uncovered. The prepared body is then placed in a receiving room, where the priest recites the Psalmody of the Midnight Office. In fact, the priest holds a vigil, from whence here in America we derive the term "holding a wake" or staying awake through the night. The Service of the Household includes the singing of Psalm 35, "Judge, O Lord, all those who judge me; combat all those who enter into combat against me." Then, they sing the hymn of repose, recite a litany asking God for mercy and that He may not consider the deceased "as chaff to be burnt on the day of reckoning." A lengthy prayer is then read in which the Creation, fall of man, suffering of Christ and hope of resurrection are the main themes. Likewise, another prayer, based upon the Lord's Prayer is read. The Scriptural lections are Psalm 39:4-6; II Corinthians 1:3-11; Psalm 77:1 and John 5:19-23. Following the readings, there is a litany followed by two prayers, then the hymns of repose is sung and the traditional prayers of the departed is said: "O Christ our God, give rest to the souls of those who are reposing, and to us sinners, grant forgiveness of our transgressions."

The following morning, they carry the now-enshrouded body to the church sanctuary where they begin the funeral service. It is interesting that the hymns of the funeral service correspond to the traditional order of the Morning Hour of Prayers. Following the many beautiful hymns — most of which are based upon the theme of the call to repentance and the forgiveness of sins — they read the following Scriptural lessons: Psalm 84:4, 1; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; Psalm 30:1 and John 12:24-26. Upon the comple-

tion of the readings, a litany and several prayers, the body is carried out of the church to the cemetery. On the way, they sing the canticle found in Isaiah 38:10-20. When they reach the gates of the cemetery, they stop to hear the Scriptures: Psalm 119:133; Matthew 11:25-30 and then proceed to the grave site. At the grave site, they sing elegiacally Psalm 116:7 and verses 1-9 and read the following Scriptural lessons: Psalm 116:7, 1; I Corinthians 15:12-24; Psalm 102:1 and John 5:24-30. Thereupon, a litany and two prayers are read, the second of which is perhaps the most magnificent prayer which explains the Second Coming, the Final Judgment, and the Hope of Resurrection. Next they offer blessing thrice over the dusty earth which is to be cast into the bottom of the grave, recalling that we came from dust and to dust we shall return. The shrouded body is then lowered into the grave while they read Psalm 23 in full. At this point, they pronounce the committal and begin to cast the dusty earth into the grave to completely cover the body. Theologically, we recognize that the body has entered the womb of the earth, and the soul has been released to the anges, and so the Church sings the hymn "Glory to God in the highest" which is originally from our Feast of the Nativity. This is followed by Psalm 88:6 and a long litany of petitions on behalf of the departed soul which in turn is followed by a lengthy prayer for the forgiveness of the sins of the departed and for eternal repose of the soul. Again, several hymns of the departed are sung, followed by the sealing of the grave, tomb and sepulcher, as well as the bones of the departed - by the sign of the Holy Cross, the Word of the Holy Gospel, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Finally, the dominical and immovable seal is "affixed" until Christ's Coming when He shall renew the departed with His Glory. After the sealing of the grave, they return to the house of the departed where they read Psalm 44:17-26, offer fellowship and condolences and break bread in memory of the rested soul, in Armenian *hokejash*.

On the next day, they return to the grave site and read the following Scriptural lessons: Psalm 130:1, 2; II Thessalonians 2:13-17; Psalm 30:1; Luke 21:34-38. Then prayers are offered prayers, including assurances that the seals of the graves are fixed and immovable.

Again on the seventh day, the

fortieth day and on the first year commemoration, they go to the grave site and read the following Scriptural lessons: Isaiah 66:18-20; I Corinthians 15:35-41; Psalm 138:8; John 14:27-31.

Death, to the bereaving survivors, foments varied emotional reactions. Our approach to death from prolonged diseases is markedly different from our reaction to fatal accidents or unexpected swift natural causes. The Armenian Church, through Her rich Scriptural and liturgical tradition offers prayers for the departed and consoles the bereaved. She prepares us for the Second Coming and guides us in our paths - that we may walk toward the good and rejoice in Christ, when he invites us: "Come, ye blessed ones of my Father, and inherit the heavenly kingdom which has been prepared for you," (Matthew 25:34). ☩

MEDICINE continued from page 11

tion to the problem is that we as adults have to set an example to our children for a healthier and purer life style. We need to live and not just talk about health. There are many things one can do to enjoy good health. We can stop smoking, decrease or stop our alcohol consumption, start exercising and so on. We need to be open and frank in dealing with questions of health and disease with our children. For example, the only way to avoid sexually transmitted disease is by abstinence from sexual activity. We need to deal with the drug problem by open and frank discussions with our children. We as parents must not avoid talking about these matters because if we don't take the initiative someone else will. This is our duty and should not be given to anyone else.

We need to instill the word of God in our children. They need to know the moral rules which will govern their lives. Without this I am afraid that we have a very bleak future in sight, not only for us but the whole of humanity.

There are no easy answers to the financial questions either. We spend massive amounts of money to do the research that will uncover the mysteries of disease. We spend massive amounts to discover new chemicals from which drugs can be made.

The more money we spend on research and development, the higher the costs for implementing the newly discovered cures become. Last year in the United States alone we spent \$800 billion for health care. The amount is mind numbing when we add to this what is spent in the rest of the world. Even though huge sums of funds are spent all over the world for health care, there are still tens of millions of people who do not have health care at all. What responsibility does the world community have for these people? Do we just ignore them and go on with life?

Advances in the technology of gene manipulation and genetic engineering have raised new ethical and moral questions. Are we interfering with the normal and natural functioning of the body? Are we playing God when we are able to manipulate the outcome of natural genetic formation? Or are we just trying to alleviate genetic disease and suffering? As we enter the 1990's there are and will be new discoveries in many of the examples I have already given and many more as well. With each new discovery we must continue to ask ourselves are we interfering with nature or are we using the intelligence God has given us to discover new ways to care for and heal the sick.

The human body with all its complexity is a miracle. Our skin helps regulate the body's temperature. Our digestive system extracts the nutrients we need to live. Here is a complex machine that has built in defenses to fight illness. The brain can carry on innumerable functions at the same time and keep it in memory for years. All these things happen without a conscious effort on our part. As we all know, however, there are many illnesses that no matter how hard the body fights, it can not overcome them.

In his book, *When Bad Things Happen To Good People*, Rabbi Harold Kushner states, "I don't know why one person gets sick and another does not, but I can only assume that some natural laws which we don't understand are at work. I cannot believe that God 'sends' illness to a specific person for a specific reason. I don't believe God has a weekly quota of malignant tumors to distrib

continued on page 27



The Armenian Church Research and Analysis Group (ACRAG) was founded in 1989 by a group of clergy and laity of the Armenian Church. ACRAG attempts to feel the need for a professional and innovative approach to the matters facing the Armenian people in general and the Armenian Church in particular. With a firm commitment to the Traditions of the Church and sharing the vision of St. Gregory the Illuminator, ACRAG, through its *Window*, provides a forum for contemporary Church thought. The aims of ACRAG 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 fill the gap between the National and Religious characteristics of the Armenian Community.

Electronic Window

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 24 hours a day (1408.257.1846) or via the archive-server@sain.org. E-mail regarding *Window* may be sent through the internet to acrag@sain.org.

window™

view of the Armenian Church

"The Most Progressive and Fearless Quarterly in the Diaspora today."

—Asbarez (8/92)

Send completed form and check to:
 ACRAG, P.O. Box 700664, San Jose, CA 95170
 One year (four issues): USA - \$22; Canada - \$25; Other \$32
 Make check payable to "Window"

Unless otherwise stated, subscriptions will begin with the current issue.

Subscribe today!

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Subscribe for a friend!

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Subscribe for your local parish!

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Back issue request:

Back issues of Window are available at \$5.50 per issue + \$3 s&h per order. See contents of previous issues on back cover.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. I, No. 1 - Premier Issue | <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. II, No. 2 - Clergy Conference |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. I, No. 2 - Liberation Theology | <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. II, No. 3 - Denominations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. I, No. 3 - Genocide & Church | <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. II, No. 4 - Myth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. I, No. 4 - Collar & Clergy | <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. III, No. 1 - Church in Armenia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. II, No. 1 - Cults in Armenia | <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. III, No. 2 - Hypocrisy |

THE FINAL EXIT COMPASSION OR CRIME?

An excerpt from the Final Exit, where Derek Humphry tells the case of his wife and how his crusade for "mercy killing" started.

WHEN MY FIRST WIFE COULD NO LONGER BEAR THE PAIN and deterioration of her body and the distressed quality of her life from cancer, she asked me to help her end her life. It was both a logical and a poignant request.

But what should I do? I was not a doctor or a pharmacist. Violent ending of life, such as shooting, stabbing, or strangling, was deeply abhorrent to me, largely because my 35 years as a newspaper reporter had too often shown me the ugly end results.

"Find a doctor who will give us a lethal overdose that I can take," Jean pleaded. Unable to bear to see her suffering and noting the calmness of her request, I decided, then and there, to help.

Who could I ask? The three doctors who had been treating her with great skill and dedication came to mind first. They had spent so much time caring for her, although they now recognized – and spoke openly to her and to me – that death was approaching, and that they were running out of countermeasures.

However, I was thinking of asking one of these three highly professional men to commit a crime: that of assisting a suicide. The penal code takes no account of a person's wish to die, nor of how close and inevitable death may be. If it were discovered that one of them had helped my wife to die, that individual would be subject to prosecution in court, and disqualification from practicing medicine.

I couldn't ask them, I decided. But I still had to help Jean – she was depending on me.

Then, I remembered a young doctor whom I had met many years before while reporting on medical matters for my newspaper

I called "Dr. Joe" and asked if we could meet. He invited me to his consulting rooms, for he had by now become an eminent physician with a lucrative practice. As prestigious and powerful as he was, he still had not lost the compassion and humanity that I had noted in earlier years. I told him how seriously ill Jean was and of her desire to die soon. He questioned me closely about the state of the disease, its effects on her, and what treatments she had undergone.

As soon as he heard that some of her bones were breaking at the slightest sudden movement, he stopped the conversation. "There's no quality of life left for her," he said. He got up from his desk and strode to his medicine cabinet.

Dr. Joe did some mixing of pills, and handed a vial to me. He explained that the capsules should be emptied into a sweet drink to reduce the bitter taste. "This is strictly between you and me," he said, looking straight into my eyes.

A few weeks later, when Jean knew the time had come, she asked me for the drugs. As wrenching as it was, I had to agree. We spent the morning reminiscing about our 22 years together. Then, after dissolving the pills in some coffee, we said our last goodbyes. I watched as Jean picked up the coffee and drank it down. She barely had time to murmur, "Goodbye, my love," before falling asleep. Fifty minutes later she stopped breathing.

My wife died in 1975 as she wished and as she deserved. However, to accomplish that, two crimes were committed.

First, Dr. Joe broke the law by prescribing drugs for a patient not registered with him, a patient he had never seen. Also, he had assisted a suicide because he handed over the drugs knowing what they were intended for. Second, I committed the crime of assisting a suicide, the penalty for which in Britain, where I was living at the time, is up to 14 years imprisonment.

Now, did Dr. Joe and I commit truly felonious, culpable crimes and did we deserve punishment? Aren't these archaic laws ready to be changed to situations befitting modern understanding and morality?

Derek Humphry, *Final Exit: The Practicalities of Self-Deliverance and Assisted Suicide for the Dying*, (The Hemlock Society, 1991), pp. 15-17. © 1991, by Derek Humphry.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS SUFFERING OR SALVATION?

An excerpt from T. Droege's *Guided Grief Imagery*

W

E PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED, (1 Corinthians 1:23). OF ALL

the world religions only Christianity has an image of death as its central symbol. To rediscover the full imagery of death that the cross represents, we need to return to the Gospels, especially the Gospel of Mark. The fear of death which is evoked by the image of the cross is expressed by Mark with striking realism, and it is clear that Jesus experienced the fear as well as his followers. The fear was that Jesus' death meant defeat, the powerlessness of God, the victory of Satan, and the establishment of death's reign. If the valley of the dry bones is an image of the death of Israel in the exile, then the cross is an image of the death of the whole cosmos.

Rarely do we allow ourselves to experience the full power of death which is imaged in the cross. Rarely do we let ourselves contemplate how close to the teetering edge of chaos our world came in this event. Rarely do we see the image of the cross as an image of the death we deserve. Rarely do we see the cross as the moment of Death's greatest victory and Life's greatest loss.

The power of death must have seemed omnipotent to Jesus on Calvary unless we assume that his deity rendered death more important for him than it is for us. Jesus is called "the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Heb 12:2) because on the cross he is a better example than even Abraham of faith which sustains in the throes of the deepest kind of existential anxiety, an anxiety which floods the heart and soul when the promise by which one lives seems to be under the threat of extinction. Though feeling abandoned, forsaken even by God, Jesus calls out "My God," trusting in the promise that he was indeed the "beloved Son" that his Father in heaven had called him at his baptism.

The cross which stands behind the altar in the Chapel of the Resurrection at Valparaiso University is called Christ the King. It depicts Christ on the cross, but with the crown of a king rather than a crown of thorns, and with arms outstretched in victory rather than being nailed to victory from defeat. This is imagery of life bursting forth from death, victory from defeat, strength from weakness, and the power to save from suffering. Such imagery is a helpful reminder that God chose death as the means by which to end death's reign of terror, that the images of the cross and the empty tomb are inextricably intertwined, that there is no way around death, but only a way through it.



Thomas A. Droege. *Guided Grief Imagery: A Resources for Grief Ministry and Death Education*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), pp. 27-28. © 1987 by Thomas A. Droege.

THE FINAL ACT

Gregory Doudoukjian

Prelude

On August 1, at 8:00 PM, the entire United States population will have the opportunity to view the public killing of David Jones. His death will come quick – a matter of seconds – much shorter than his ten year wait on death row.

In the Summer of 1983, Mr. Jones was convicted for the first degree rape and murder of two young Los Angeles women. His wait on death row has ended and U.S. citizens will have front row seats for this widely debated primetime viewing. Sit back, relax, kick your shoes off and make the popcorn because the show is about to begin.

Lights. Camera. Action.

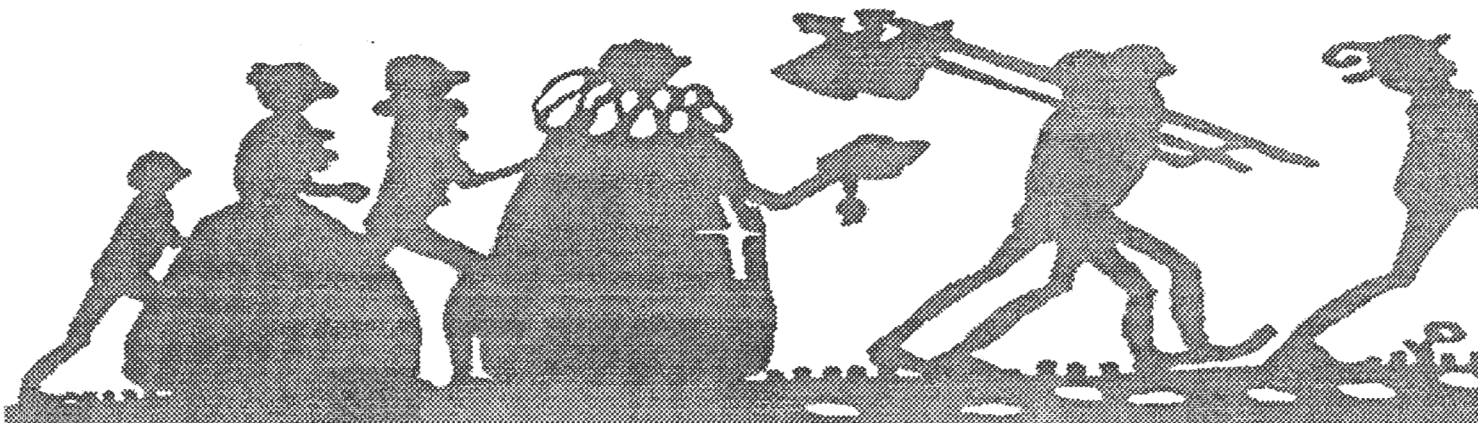
The mood inside the prison is pensive, as preparation for the execution of David Jones is about to get

Deacon Gregory Doudoukjian is a graduate of St. Nersess Armenian Seminary and is currently continuing his post-graduate studies in Jerusalem at the Seminary of the Armenian Patriarchate.

underway. Mr. Jones has just finished his last meal – the meal of his choice -- lobster tails and New York steak. Mr. Jones has spent the majority of his day in the company of his family, waiting for his time to end. Television cameramen and personnel have been busy all day preparing wires and cables for this public spectacle. At 7:30PM Mr. Jones is asked to say his final good-bye to his family. In a tearful embrace David bids farewell. He walks down the long corridor leading to the separate building where a room will have the cold, steel chair awaiting his arrival. Meanwhile, his body is being prepared for the execution. His head, wrists, and left shin and calf are shaved to make the circuit complete. The witnesses begin to arrive; among them are the parents of one of Mr. Jones' victims. They wait behind a sound proof glass window to view the execution. Mr. Jones has requested the presence of a clergyman to offer final prayers.

Fr. George, the local Orthodox

clergyman from the area has been called to perform the blessing. His parish is five minutes away from the prison. His pastoral work often includes prison ministry. At 7:20PM, Fr. George enters into his car in route to the prison. His inner thoughts are racing regarding the execution that is about to take place. As he gets into his car and begins his drive, Fr. George starts to question the morality of this event. He convinces himself that the State has the right to punish in the name of the government and in the name of law and order. He reminds himself that it is all right "to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." At the next traffic light, his conscience screams out loud – "You have heard that it was said an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth... [and] You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you,



and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you..." Fr. George thinks to himself, How can I, as a Christian man, a Christian priest, a representative of Christ, be present at such an event, an event aired on national TV? What has happened to our society, millions will tune into their TV's and watch this live horror movie! At the next intersection, Fr. George rationalizes the execution by saying, "Maybe this event will help deter future criminals from performing such violent crimes in our society." His conscience quickly counters, "You know George, there is a greater problem at hand. The problem is not what to do with the criminal or how to deter their criminal activity. It must start with reforms in society, in government, in the penal system, in education, in family life. Don't rationalize this equally barbaric crime performed by the government!"

As he pulls into the prison parking lot, Fr. George takes a deep breath, makes the sign of the cross, and prays for the Holy Spirit to direct him in his actions. As he walks to the front doors, he thinks to himself, "What about the value of human life, we are all created in the image and likeness of God. A life should never be taken, on the contrary, life should be valued and esteemed. Mr. Jones should be given another chance, a chance to prove once again his value as a citizen of this country, a child of God, who has the possibility to seek forgiveness— instead this act will make everything final. In the next fleeting moment he lays eyes on the victim's family, who look on in anticipation and nervousness. "They want vengeance, retribution, and justice," Fr. George ponders. As Fr. George shakes their hand and greets them,

he realizes that they are entitled to feel the way they feel, after all, "How would I react if this had happened to someone in my family," thought Fr. George. "Hopefully, my reactions would be based on my previous reality. The reality in which I base my life — a life based on the Gospel. However, does everyone live in this reality?" Engrossed in his thoughts, the warden taps Fr. George on the back and says, "It's time." A lump forms in his throat, as he enters onto death row where he greets David Jones.

A ten second walk seems like eternity as he thought to himself, "I am a man of the cloth — my job is to pray for God's grace, to pray for healing, to pray for the uplifting of the soul, not to condemn the soul. How can I participate in such an event. How is my God reacting to this? How is David's God reacting? Where is the power of the Church? Where is the power of God? Is it entrusted in the executioner who in five minutes, with the switch of a lever, will send almost 2000 volts of electricity into a frail human body and soul?"

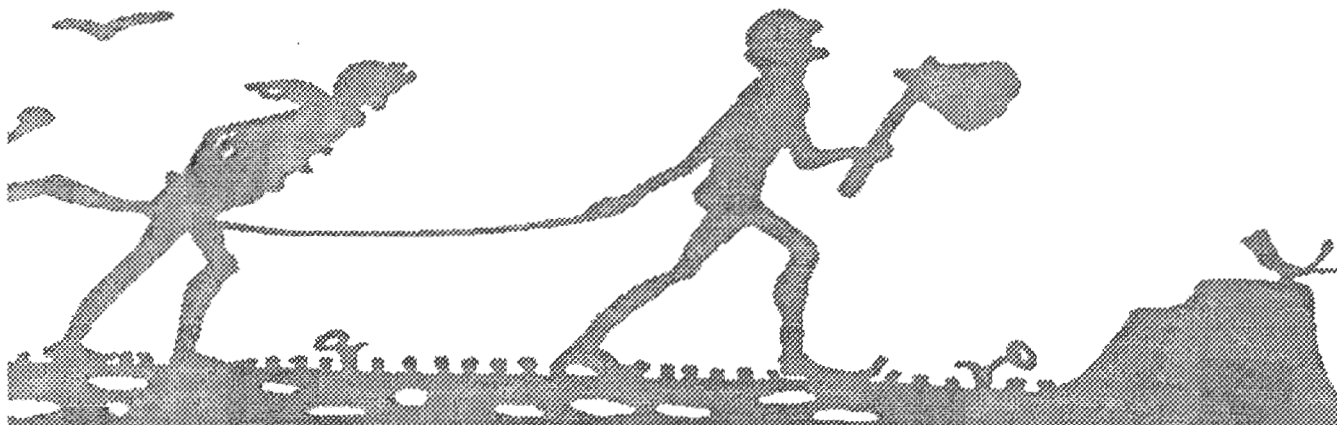
Fr. George looks into the eyes of David Jones and begins his final prayer. "May God our heavenly Father have mercy on you. May He forgive you of all your trespasses." Fr. George then offers David Jones communion proclaiming, "May this portion be unto you for the forgiveness and the remission of your sins. With the priestly authority committed to me and by the divine command that whatever is forgiven on earth shall be also forgiven in Heaven; I absolve you of all participation of sin. I welcome you back into the community of the church. Your sins are forgiven. Go in peace and may you sin no more." A single tear falls from

the eye of Fr. George, as he realizes David Jones will no longer go in peace on this earth. He says "Amen" and ends his prayer. Fr. George accompanies Mr. Jones, the prison warden, and four guards to the execution chamber. David Jones is strapped helplessly into the chair and a face guard is tied around his head. No sooner does Fr. George exit than the switch is pulled and Mr. Jones is jolted to his death. David Jones is pronounced dead at 8:02 PM, February 1. At 8:03pm, Americans, some satisfied, others not, continue to watch their regularly scheduled program.

At 10:30PM that same night, Fr. George is at home with his family. After spending time with his two children and wife, he retires for the evening. Before sleeping, he goes before his Holy Icon of Christ, lights a candle, and falls to his knees. On his knees, he begs God to have mercy on him, on David Jones, and on the United States government.

Postscript

The premise of the script, "The Final Act" was taken from an article titled "The Ultimate Horror Show" in Time Magazine, June 3, 1991. The article was based on the defeated court decision which wanted to publicly show the execution of Robert Alton Harris from the San Quentin prison in California. The article argued that the public meaning of Harris' execution would do more harm to our society than good. I have taken their idea one step further and presented the inner thoughts of one Orthodox clergyman, who is caught between the conflict of the separation of church and State, of right and wrong, and life and death.



EULOGY

DEATH
OF AN
AIDS
VICTIM

Fr. Tateos Abdalian

Note: Gary Kahian was a man of 36 when he died of the AIDS virus. He and Fr. Tateos became good friends over the last few years of his life. Here presented are the words spoken at his funeral, just a week before Christmas, 1992.

Throughout the Scriptures, there is a theme that runs strong and true. It says that when we feel that life has betrayed us, when others turn away from us, when we feel most alone, God stands by us, is always faithful to us and persists in loving us, being with us even in the most terrifying of situations, caring for us without regard for spiritual or physical condition. St. Paul affirms this by writing that "nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus."

God is always with us, regardless of circumstance, though sometimes we must struggle to discover that abiding presence. For pain and suffering are sometimes accompanied by guilt which may lead us to feel that God has turned away and no longer cares. But this is far from the truth, for God is always eager to offer forgiveness and to accept us in his love.

St. Paul writes to the Romans "For at the very time when we were still powerless, then Christ died for the wicked. Even for a just man one of us would hardly die, though perhaps for a good man one might actually brave death; but Christ died for us while we were yet sinners, and that is God's own proof of his love towards us."

Gary ran the gambit of these emotions. At times, he felt betrayed. He was frightened. He felt alone. He was angry. He felt he was being punished. He knew pain and suffering. But one thing Gary always held onto was hope. He never let go of it. His desire to live was strong. He was keenly aware of all the different medications and their consequences, all the procedures, the testing and their results, saying OK, what's next?

Gary and I became good friends. As his priest, we would sit and talk about his life and impending death, of AIDS, of how people reacted to him and treated and sometimes mistreated him. I would hear his confession and administer the Sacraments to him. I would try to console him, assure him of God's love for him.

Gary and I were also a challenge for each other. He would come up with the most incredible questions about the teachings of the church; he would make comments about the community, about me. We would get into it, and when I got frustrated because I was losing the argument, I would just tell him he was either a lunatic or was experiencing a reaction to all the medications. I would get on his case about his smoking, threatening that if he smoked any more, I would make him eat his cigarettes before he smoked another. One time I reported him to the nurse in the hospital for smoking and he yelled at me again. There were other times, but I'll leave those between Gary and me.

But above all, Gary was a man of hope, of the future. Last spring, he talked of traveling to Cape Cod for a summer vacation, and to Maine for a few

continued on page 27

Fr. Abdalian, pastor of St. George Armenian Church, Hartford, CT, is a columnist for Window.

EULOGY

THE
BOY
WHO
SANG
THE
PSALMS

Fr. Vazken Movsesian

Note: Saro Balabonian passed away at age 7, after a four year battle with leukemia. During his bout with cancer, he earned the affection and respect of his community. Following is the eulogy from his funeral service (June '93), translated from Armenian.

Just about every day we hear reports of children dying in Somalia, Bosnia, Bangladesh or some third world country. Famine, war and poverty claim the lives of these, the young and innocent. As tragic as these stories may be, we have the option of turning the station or folding close the newspaper and going about our daily business. But today's story is not from a world far away. And unlike other tragedies in this world, we don't have the opportunity to turn the channel or turn the page. We are facing the death of a young boy, one who has touched so many of us in many different ways. We are standing before the reality we can't escape, Saro has left us.

Unlike the stories we hear from Somalia and Bangladesh, Saro didn't die because of man-made problems of famine, greed and war. In fact he had all the resources one could want along with the love and devotion of very special parents and family. The villain was cancer and after fighting it for a few years, the good guy lost this battle.

Saro was a unique little boy. He always had a smile, even when he wasn't feeling well. Until his last dying moment, that smile did not leave his face. You didn't hear Saro complain much either. Whether a blood transfusion or not being able to play with other little boys, you didn't hear him complain or frown. He wasn't too different from other little boys. He loved sports. He liked to play video games. He knew the basketball statistics like no one else. Most of all, he had a positive outlook. He hoped for a brighter tomorrow and was always filled with wonderment about things around him. Saro was a young boy with hope and expectations. His outlook was positive, always finding something good in even the worst of situations. It is in this light that I wish to present this eulogy today. For if Saro were standing with us now, knowing him, he would want to make us feel good and would comfort us.

But how do we find something good in what happened today? Saro was seven years old. At that age, your biggest concern should be what kind of ice cream you're going to eat, or which ride you will go on at the carnival. Instead, Saro was confronted with the nightmare of waking up with cancer, of receiving new blood, of rejections and transplants— all things which would scare anyone— but somehow Saro would comfort us all.

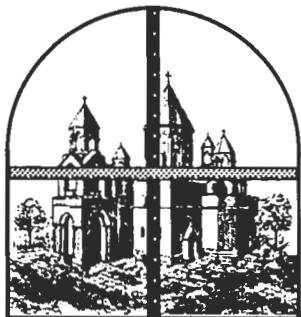
Saro grew up with a love for God, instilled by his father Rafi and mother Nora and grandparents. He would recite the psalms. On his last day, he recited Psalm 23: "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want..."

It is easy for us today to look, in our usual cynicism and ask, where was God when Saro needed Him? Why did the God who Saro trusted, let him down? But let us look at Saro's life through the eyes of innocence that Saro had. Where was God? God was there throughout every phase of Saro's illness. God was working the miracle of miracles— bringing people together out of concern— in love and respect for human life! God was teaching us the most valuable lesson of our lives — the need to love and help one another!

continued on next page

*Blessed
are the
pure in heart,
for they shall
see God...*

—Sermon on the Mount
Matt 5:8



It is unusual — we adults think we have so much to teach the young ones, when in reality, there is so much to learn from them. One day, people brought infants to our Lord so that he would touch them and the disciples ordered the people not to. Jesus told them, *“Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.”* (Luke 18:16) And later he tells us that *“the angels (of the children) continually see the face of my Father in heaven.”* (Matt. 18:10)

We expected and waited for a miracle with Saro. In fact, we received it, but sometimes our senses are too dull to notice it or to accept it. Saro was an angel sent by God, who visited us and taught us much about life. Saro’s was a short life, but a full life — where he touched and loved us. He taught us. You see, the miracle happened three years ago, when the doctors told the family that Saro’s life was limited to a few months. Since that time we have seen strength, courage, hopefulness and faith in this young boy. He taught us what it means to believe, *“The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want.”* He taught us what it means, to *“have faith as a little child, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.”* He taught us that there is no fear when you trust in the Lord because you trust in the One who said, *“Courage! The victory is mine. I have overcome the world!”* He taught us that the pure in heart are truly blessed, *“for they shall see God.”*

Saro’s life became the miracle we expected. God touched us through Saro!

We began to believe. We began to hope. We began to pray. We began to realize that this existence is not the end of all things! We saw people crossing boundaries. It didn’t matter if it was an evangelical church, a catholic church or an orthodox church (Armenian and non-Armenian alike) — communities came down on their knees to pray. As if God were telling us, *“Enough of these denominational divisions. I am ONE!”*

Saro was the miracle. Saro was the angel who came and touched us. And whenever we look at the stories of the Bible and see miracles of angels and bright lights — let us never forget that those are not stories which happened centuries ago, but God is working through His people today! Saro was now. And everyone of us who was touched by Saro was a part of the miracle.

Today, we have the comfort of knowing that this life has not ended for Saro, because of the unfailing words of our Lord Jesus Christ: *“I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live!”* Today, we bid farewell to Saro with the complete faith and acceptance that Saro lives today, where there is no pain, where there is no suffering, where there is no cancer, in his rightful place with his heavenly father, in the kingdom of all eternities.

In the Armenian Church funeral service we read the passage from the Gospel of St. John — *“Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”* Jesus was talking about himself, but we can easily extend this to Saro. Saro is that single seed that has died, but will produce much harvest and fruit. You, me, everyone of us who has been touched, is now obligated to keep the miracle going. Today, when you remember Saro, remember all the pain in the world. Remember the children of war. Remember the children of famine. Remember the children of disease. Remember the need to put an end to illness and disease. Pray for and support the research projects that promise hope for the sick. If you gave blood for Saro, don’t stop giving because Saro is gone. If you prayed, don’t stop praying because Saro is gone. If you visited and laughed with Saro, don’t stop doing so with others in need, because Saro is gone. There are many other Saros who need and deserve our attention.

And when you help these other Saros, that *“grain of wheat”* — Saro — begins to blossom. It will be evident that our Little Angel, our Little Saro, lives in you through your deeds. And may God bless all of you — family, friends, acquaintances, doctors and nurses. You were all part of the miracle which can now only begin — the miracle we knew as Saro. ☩

TOWARD A THEOLOGY OF SCIENCE

by Richard Kirby, Ph. D.
SPECIAL FOR WINDOW

DR. RICHARD KIRBY is Principal of the International Academy of Christ, a theological college based in London, England, and Chair of the American-based Religious Futurists Network. He is the author or co-author of several theological texts, including *The Mission of Mysticism* (1979), *Christians and the World of Computers* (1990) and *The Temples of Tomorrow: World Religions and the Future* (1993), and has been as an occasional lecturer and teacher for the Armenian Church in the U.S.A.

The 20th century has been the Age of Science *par excellence*. Yet as we stand at the threshold of the 21st century, the need for a "spiritual civilization" – in accordance with the teachings of Christ: on earth, as it is in heaven – alongside "technological civilization" is imperative. The 21st century needs to be an Age of Theology as well as an Age of Science, and therefore the 20th Century's intellectual achievement, the *Philosophy of Science*, needs to be followed by the 21st century's *Theology of Science*.

The 20th century, the century of quantum mechanics and electronics, relativity theory and atomic bombs, genetic engineering and biological warfare, has been the most scientific, the most deadly, the most warlike and the most turbulent in history. The 21st will have the same mix of the potent fruits of the Tree of Knowledge unless there is a concerted movement by the Church to place sound theological understanding at the very heart of philosophy of science. In other words, there needs to be New Science for the New Millennium, a science worthy of Christ, just as the First Millennium ended with the Renaissance looming up and the principle of experimentation appearing. The Church must not ignore science and technology - this is the easy option - but extend to these great branches of human activity the resources of the Gospel of redemption and the life of sanctification. For a truly holy science, based on the Gospel and the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, is a real possibility, and an intellectual task worthy of the coming century/millennium, which is just seven years away as I write.

Historians of science are widely agreed that it was the Christian doctrine of Creation - faith in the Universe or Nature as both contingent and rational - which paved the way for the modern era of science; but this does not mean that the actual ideals, or to speak more theologically, the 'gods', of science, are presently derived from sound Christian theological understanding.

For we are not stuck with our present philosophy of science as the only one possible. To see how theology can contribute to the sanctification and redemption of science, as it contributed somewhat to its creation or origination, we must however look at some history.

'Modern,' in the phrase 'modern era', does not in this connection mean 20th century; it means an era which was launched by the Renaissance of the 12th and 13th century, followed by the Reformation, and resulting in the birth of such modern nation-states as Germany – and, later, America. 'Modern' means that which is contrasted with ancient (as in the time of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle), and medieval (as in the time of Augustine, Boethius, Charlemagne and the Holy Roman Empire). 'Modern' means the era in which the *high medieval synthesis* broke up, and the rule of popes and creeds was gradually succeeded by the principle of truth, of experiment, of individual conscience, of guidance by civil rather than ecclesiastical powers – in short, the 'modern age' is almost exactly the age of 'science' in the broad sense.

The 20th Century has been the great Age of Science. It was some time coming; the Age of Reason which preceded it in the 18th Century was followed by the Age of the Industrial Revolution which reached its peak in the 19th century foundations had been laid in the 18th century.

The word 'science' is simply an adaptation of the medieval Latin word *scientia* meaning knowledge. In the modern era (in the specifically 'scientific'

sense which began to get fully under way by the time of Italy's Galileo Galilei and England's Francis Bacon (16th- 17th century)), however, this *scientia* was particularly associated with the study of nature. Bacon was one of the prime movers of the experimental study of nature which led to the creation of the Royal Society, the premier society of scientific investigators of which Sir Isaac Newton (born 1642, the year of Galileo's death) became in due course the President. But above all this new *scientia* represented the new principle of experimental, observational truth – a principle which supplanted, not without upheaval – the medieval principle of revealed truth interpreted through the doctrines/dogmas of the Church, i.e. the Roman Magisterium, and therefore through the ecclesiastical authority which we now associate with the Inquisition, the Auto-da-Fe [burning at the stake] and the suppression of truth and education.

Galileo and his version of the New Physics and the New Astronomy was, as is well known, silenced and forced to recant the 'Copernican hypothesis', the heliocentric theory of the universe*. This is not to say that Galileo was 'right', morally, and the Church 'wrong'. Different values were operating in that dispute; they still are. And since the atomic bomb, science has known sin, according to Robert Oppenheimer.** That was part of its coming-of-age in the 20th century, as it discovered the dark underside of eating of the Tree of Knowledge. But the way forward does not lie in cultivating ignorance or technophobia; what is required is to follow the sin of science with the redemption of science, and then its sanctification. Thanks to Abraham Maslow and others, we have the rudiments of a "psychology of science": we lack as yet a spirituality of science. This will come when theologians become deeply involved in the adventure of scientific research – not as 'insiders', nor as 'outsiders', but as pastors to the knowing process itself. This means, for example, a chaplaincy to laboratories – and sometimes it means that church communities should be deliberately experimental so as to learn more about the scientific outlook.

As science beget the Philosophy of Science, the church will beget the theology of Science. This is neither a renunciation of scientific research, nor is it a quest for a "Scientific Theology" or a Theological Science (other than Christian Doctrine); rather, theology of science is the exposition of the work of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in the creation, redemption and sanctification of science, and therefore of technology.

For if we are to "create the 21st century", in the words of the Washington-based World Future Society, we need a new science for a new century; and this science, guided and empowered by that divine love and wisdom which is the life of the Holy Spirit, requires a new, non-dualistic theory of knowledge (epistemology) in which love and science are unified under the canopy of the Gospel. For the 'gods of science' are not love but power, and ultimately the mechanical assumptions of contemporary science lead the human race towards the order of death and away from the order of life. Furthermore, until the philosophy of science learns about the relational nature of being from the Christian Trinitarian doctrine, it will remain individualistic and separatist, leading only to frustration.

We need a new science for a new century; and therefore, to some extent, we need new theologies, new theologians. The challenge of 21st century science therefore provides an opportunity for the theological teachers of even the Armenian Church to develop a new curriculum: not theology and science, nor science and religion, but theology of science, which will lead in the end to science *in Christ*, a work of the church, a part of the mission of the people of God to the suffering world. ■

*For a fair-minded account of this, see the monumental history of astronomy by Arthur Koestler, *The Sleepwalkers*.

** For more information, see *The Physicists* by C.P.Snow.

Sections of the article "The Lost Generation: An Armenian Church Scenario," by Dean Shahinian (*Window Vol. III, No. 2*) were inadvertently omitted. Below we reprint the text in its entirety. We apologize for this error. —ACRAG

The Lost Generation: An Armenian Church Scenario by Dean Shahinian

Recently, questions have resurfaced about the relationship of second generation Armenian-Americans and the Armenian Church, and why so many have left the Church. As we know, second generation young adults can bring a parish community their enthusiasm, new ideas for activities, professional skills, care and love, and other qualities and resources. Thus, many parishioners are concerned that their children, grandchildren or other relatives and friends have stopped participation in the Armenian Church.

There are numerous reasons to explain the absence of this generation in the life of the Church. Some young adults say that the Armenian Church in America:

- Lacks an apparent mission (other than money and publicity)
- Offers an Eastern form of worship that alienates Western minds
- Treats people who do not speak the Armenian language as second-class parishioners
- Is mostly a social club or political organization
- Is indifferent to parishioners' needs
- Has some lay leaders and clergy who do not set good examples
- Ignores their suggestion to improve the church
- Cannot teach about contemporary moral issues
- Has a value system that is not Christian
- Is irrelevant to their lives

Many of these concerns are beyond the control of most parishioners. However, each parishioner can influence at least one important factor that determines whether a second generation young adult participates in the Church. When a parishioner forms a relationship with a young adult— treats him or her with respect and meets some of his or her needs — the young adult will become more involved in the community.

Here, I present two humorous vignettes depicting how young adults are treated at two imaginary Armenian Church parishes. Both skits are caricatures and neither replicates any actual parish. At parish #1, selfish parishioners deal with young adults to get their money, time and free professional advice; to use them as chaperones, cooks and chauffeurs; and to manipulate and berate them. Who would stay here? At parish #2, caring parishioners deal with young adults to praise and encourage them; to give career counseling and advice on marriage, to offer them food, a social outing and spiritual programs to meet their needs, and to seek their participation in improving parish life.

We may recognize personal experiences in each of these vignettes and smile as we read. However, afterwards, let us consider "what type of relationships do I have with young adults?" the answer describes in part the church we are building.

Which is your Church?

Characters

Mrs. Pezishkian, mother of daughter in her 20's
Susan, young doctor in her 20's-30's
Armen Norian, newcomer to the community in his 20's-30's
Tom Lavian, financial analyst for company in his 20's-30's
Mrs. Kitigian, older woman with arthritis in knee
Mr. Barabian, aggressive man who sells raffles
Mrs. Manchian, mother of strong-willed teenage son who is applying to college
Mr. Jashian, man who recruits women to cook for the bazaar
Mr. Zuilian, father of teenagers who need activities
Mr. Parevian, talkative man who remembers the good old days
Rev. Karozian, parish priest

Scene

Sunday morning. The fellowship hall of Sts. Thaddeus and Bartholomew Armenian Church. The Divine Liturgy has just

concluded and parishioners are leaving the sanctuary and entering the fellowship hall.

Armen, a newcomer, enters and stands alone, looking at people as they come in. Nobody talks to him and he talks to no one else. Other parishioners come and go.

Church 1

After Badarak at the Coffee Hour

Mrs. Pezishkian and Susan, her daughter, enter the hall.

Susan (complaining): I hardly understood a single thing they said or sang in the church. Nobody does. Classical Armenian that nobody speaks. Chanting, sensing, standing, sitting, people going through the motions. Why do we come? *(pause)* There are no young adults here. The people talk only with their friends — they ignore me unless they want me to do something for them or give some money. I could be doing...

Mrs. Pezishkian: Ssh. Be quiet. It's been weeks since you came last. This is your parish. These are your people. You will enjoy being back in the Armenian Church.

Susan: Why? Are they serving lehmajune?

Mrs. Pezishkian (ignores the question): Oh, look, there's that nice Tom Lavian — he doesn't come around often. Wasn't Tom in your Sunday School class?

Susan nods.

Mrs. Pezishkian: Why don't you say hello to him? *(Mrs. Pezishkian pushes Susan towards Tom. Then she turns and goes offstage.)*

Tom (sees Susan and walks towards her): Hi Susan! I haven't seen you in a while. How's your internship at the hospital going?

Susan: Hi Tom! Glad to see you. The hospital's been interesting. I'm in pediatrics and enjoying it. Some working conditions are tough to cope with, but I am under a great doctor. How is your work with the company?

Tom: I enjoy it. But, they keep me working late practically every night and some weekends. So, I am beginning to think of looking elsewhere. *(Keeps talking until interrupted)* I've been working on some commercial loan agreements in a deal that is very complex...

Mrs. Kitigian (an older woman, comes up to the two, looks at Susan): Dalis, I need to talk to you. *(She pulls Susan by the arm away)* Susan, my knee aches. Take a look at it and do something.

Susan (dismayed): Is this the same ache you asked me about at the picnic a few months ago? ...and at the concert last month.

Mrs. Kitigian nods: Yes.

Susan: There's not much I can do. Why don't you rub some Ben Gay on it? As I said before, if you want, I will recommend a doctor who specializes in arthritis.

Mrs. Kitigian (indignant): Um! Is that all you can do? *(she leaves in a huff)*

Susan: Sorry, Tom. You were telling me about your work...

Mr. Barabian (carrying books of raffles enters, walks up and stands between them, saying): Tom, Susan, I haven't seen you in a while. *(pause)* You need to buy some raffle tickets for the church. Here, it's \$10 per book. *(Pauses, hold out four books)* Young professionals should buy a couple, don't you think?

Tom and Susan each look for their wallets and give him money for the raffles. Mr. Barabian takes the money, gives them the raffle books and leaves.

Tom to Susan: I thought we just gave money for name day, and for Easter and for aid to Armenia... seems like they always want our money or free professional advice. *(Resuming their conversation)* What was I talking about? Oh, dear, work's been busy. This year, I am not even teaching Sunday School, which used to be fun — molding the next generation.

Mrs. Manchian (comes in and interrupts): Excuse me, Tom. You remember my teenage son, George?

Tom: Yes, he was enrolled in my Sunday School class last year, but showed up only once. Very strong will, but I am sure that he will mature as he gets older.

Mrs. Manchian: Yes, and thank you for sending him all of those postcards to remind him about Sunday School. George is applying to colleges and I want you to write recommendations to four schools — tell them how good he is, strong mind — just like you said...you write so well.

Tom: *(Gulps hard)* Well, *(pause)* I will help you and write recommendations. Tell George to call me up with the specifics and bring me the forms next Sunday.

Mrs. Manchian: (Annoyed) Tom, you know, George is really too busy to call you. He has school and sings in a rock band with his friends. *(She hands Tom some forms.)* Here are the forms. *(Without waiting, she walks away.)*

Tom: (Shakes his head). Anyway, we were talking about...

Mr. Jashian (enters): Susan, honey, the ladies need some help in the kitchen. They are making *sarma* for the bazaar. Go help them. And let me tell them that you will come and work to make *bourma* and *kufte* on Monday and Wednesday afternoons.

Susan: I really can't cook. Perhaps I could help some other way? Last year, I helped with decorating in the evening and got compliments.

Mr. Jashian: An Armenian girl cannot cook? Nonsense. We need you in the kitchen. The only reason you decorated last year is that *digin Zarouhi*, who had decorated for the last 37 years, was sick. Now, she is well and will decorate the hall this year. You have to cook. Be in the kitchen, and come Monday and Wednesday.

Susan: Well, I can't stay today, but (reluctantly) I'll try to come on Monday and Wednesday to make *bourma* and *kufte* if another doctor can cover my hospital rounds.

Mr. Jashian: (leaves)

Mr. Zuilian: (comes in, pushes Armen out of the way and interrupts Tom and Susan) Tom, you are great with kids.

Tom: (flattered) Thanks, very much, Mr. Zuilian.

Mr. Zuilian: We want you to take all of the teenagers for a day long outing to the amusement park next month on the second Saturday.

Tom: (gasps) Well, thank you for the opportunity, but my free time these days is very limited. Couldn't you and other parents do it?

Mr. Zuilian: But you are so good with the young people - and this is your church. It is your duty. *(Slyly)* It won't be much work.

Tom: Give me a few days to think about it I will call you back.

Mr. Zuilian: Don't shirk your obligation - think of all the Church gives you.

Armen walks offstage. Tom and Susan resume talking.

Tom: The Church gives me a lot of work.

Susan: Some people just won't take no for an answer. That reminds me of one time...

Mr. Parevian: (Comes up and loudly) Young people! That's what I love to see, the young people together. You know, I was young myself once. When I was your age, I used to go every summer to the Catskill Mountains for two weeks and to Asbury Park for two weeks. In fact, the other day, I was looking through old snapshots *(Susan and Tom look bored, but polite - check their watches - yawn)*. Why, I used to love the dining room of the Van Hotel in Asbury Park. They made the best dinners. But, on the other hand, the Hye Hotel had nice rooms. *(Keep talking until Mr. Zuilian comes in.)* And in the Catskills, Mr. Holigian had a wonderful hotel. They used to ring the bell for meals...

Mr. Zuilian comes up, followed by Mrs. Manchian. Mr. Zuilian pushes Mr. Parevian out of the way and says to Tom: Tom, when you drive home, you go by Main Street, don't you?

Tom: Yes, Mr. Zuilian, I do.

Mr. Zuilian talks to Mrs. Manchian: Tom will drive you home.

Mr. Zulfan (talks to Tom): You can drive Mrs. Manchian home. She lives on your way.

Tom, bewildered, nods yes. Mrs. Manchian stands by Tom and starts tugging on Tom's sleeve, impatient to go.

Tom: Let me just finish talking to Susan.

Mrs. Manchian stands next to him and looks angry and impatient.

Rev. Karozian enters, holding out his hand to be kissed and saying: Tom, Susan, it must be two months since I have seen you. *(Tom and Susan each kiss his hand.)*

Rev. Karozian: (grows surly) Why haven't you been coming to church? It is your duty to serve this church! Where have you been? Where is your loyalty? What are your priorities?

Susan: Well, Hayr Soorp, I don't understand the *Badarak*. And the blue books just make it like being at the opera rather than worshipping God. The sermons are not relevant to my life. The music is not done well. I am looking for something to help me with my life and my spirituality - something that I can understand and that is done with excellence. But, I don't get much out of church.

Rev. Karozian: These are excuses. You are lazy. It's your fault. We have many books that you can read. You must read the books if you want to understand worship. Is it too much for you to come every Sunday? This is your duty as an Armenian.

Tom: But, Hayr Soorp, a friend invited me to his church, and there everybody understand the service, the songs are upbeat,

the people talk about God in their everyday life. After church, nobody asked me for money or to do work. I got a lot out of it. Why can't our church be like that?

Rev. Karozian. Troublemaker! That's all you two are, trouble-makers! This is the Armenian Church. This is how we have *Badarak*. These are our traditions. You must submit to the control and authority of the Church.

Tom: Yes, Hayr Soorp.

Susan (nods): Yes, Hayr Soorp. *(Hayr Soorp leaves.)*

Mrs. Manchian pulls Tom away, off-stage. As he is dragged off, Tom waves good bye helplessly to Susan.

Mrs. Pezishkian: (comes back to Susan) Susan, honey, I saw you talking to Tom and all those other people. Didn't I tell you - isn't it enjoyable to come back to the Armenian Church?

Susan glares at her mother and says angrily: Let's get out of here.

CHURCH 2

AFTER BADARAK AT THE FELLOWSHIP HOUR

Mrs. Pezishkian and Susan, her daughter, enter the hall.

Susan (complaining): I hardly understood a single thing they said or sang in the church. Why do we come? *(pause)* The last time I was here, there were no young adults and the people just asked me to do something or give money. I could be doing...

Mrs. Pezishkian: Be quiet. It's good for you to be here. This is your church. You will have a good time. Oh, look, there's that nice Tom Lavian. Why don't you say hello to him? *(she pushes Susan towards Tom)*

Tom sees Susan and walks towards her: Hi Susan! How's your internship at the hospital going?

Susan: Hi Tom! The hospital's been interesting. I'm in pediatrics. The working conditions are tough, but, I am under a great doctor. How is your job?

Tom: Well, I enjoy it. But, my firm keeps me working late and sometimes on weekends. I am beginning to think of looking elsewhere. *(Keeps talking until interrupted)* I have been working on some complex commercial loan agreements...

Mrs. Kitigian, an older woman, comes up to the two, looks at Susan: Dalis, we are so proud of you being a doctor. And thank you for recommending that doctor to me who specializes in arthritis. He made me feel better.

Susan looks pleased: You are welcome.

Susan: Sorry, Tom. You were telling me about these loan agreements that you have been working on...

Mr. Barabian holding raffle books enters between them and says: Tom, Susan, haven't seen you in a while. It's great to see you again. Tom, you know, I have worked for years with commercial transactions. If I can ever help you think through some of those complex deals, or dealing with corporate life, just give me a call.

Tom: Thanks very much, sir. I really appreciate that and may call you up, because I have been facing some tough decisions.

Mr. Barabian: Any time, Tom. *(He leaves to sell raffle tickets to some older people.)*

Tom: That's really nice of him. *(Resuming their conversations)* Yeah, it's been busy. This year, I am not even teaching Sunday School.

Mrs. Manchian comes and interrupts: Excuse me, Tom. You remember my son, George?

Tom: Sure. In fact, he was enrolled in my Sunday School classes last year but only came once. Very strong will, but he'll mature.

Mrs. Manchian: George is applying to colleges - who do you think we should get to write recommendations? I am not asking you because you hardly know him.

Tom: (Gulps hard) Well, he should talk with the teachers who know him real well and like him. They will write the best recommendations. I'll explain this to him if you want.

Mrs. Manchian: (Grateful) Thanks, but I'll tell him what you said. I don't want to take up your time.

Tom: Anyway, we were talking about...

Mr. Jashian (enters): Susan, honey, the ladies are in the kitchen making *sarma* for the bazaar. *(Pause)* Can I bring you a few from the kitchen to sample?

Tom: Thank you so much.

Susan: I'm sure that they are delicious. We may get some in a few minutes. *(After a moment.)* If you need help decorating the hall again this year, I'd love to volunteer.

Mr. Jashian: Thanks, Susan. I will call you.

Mr. Zuilian comes and interrupts: Good to see you again Tom, Susan. The parish council next month is sponsoring the teenagers to go to the amusement park *(Pause. Tom and Susan look apprehensive.)* with their parents as chaperons. *(Tom and*

Susan look relieved.) The parents don't want to spend the time, but we told them that the kids are theirs and they have to!

Susan: Good idea.

Mr. Zuilian: But the reason I came over is that the parish council knows that you and the others are great young people. We want to sponsor an outing for the young adults—our treat. Do you have any ideas?

Tom (flattered): Thanks, very much, Mr. Zuilian.

Susan: Why don't we call Simon, Linda, Greg, Roxanne, and some of the others and talk about it? Thanks so much for thinking of us.

Mr. Parevian (comes up and loudly): Young people! That's what I love to see, the young people together. You know, I was young myself once. (To Susan) In fact, you know Tom here is one of the brightest and most practical young men I have ever met. (To Tom) And Susan is one of the most beautiful and responsible young ladies I know; and she is so kind. Think about it.

Tom and Susan talk silently, while Mr. Parevian walks over to Armen.

Mr. Parevian (goes up to Armen): Hi! I don't believe I know you. I am Gregory Parevian.

Armen (happy): Hi, I am Armen Norian, and just moved here from New England. Thanks for stopping to talk to me. I am a computer programmer for IBM.

Mr. Parevian: That's great. Welcome to the community. Let me introduce you to two other parishioners who work for IBM. (They both walk off.)

Rev. Karozian (comes up): Tom, Susan, it must be two months since I have seen you. (Grows smiling) I am so delighted to see you again. I always enjoy your smiling faces. It brings back memories of our retreats and Sunday School outings.

Tom: Thank you, Hayr Soorp.

Susan nods affirmatively.

Rev. Karozian: How is it being a Christian in the "real world?" Remember, we are in the world, but not of it.

Tom: Well, you know, I have been wondering about how to apply Christianity in some of the things that I am being asked to do.

Rev. Karozian: Why don't you come by Tuesday or Wednesday evening this week and let's talk about it. Meanwhile, I will be asking God in my prayers to give you wisdom in the situation. (To both Tom and Susan) If I can help you with anything, just let me know. (Pause) And I am considering ways to make the worship more relevant to everyone, including young adults. Let me know if you have any suggestions – as long as we keep the substance, the form should be as meaningful and helpful as possible to our people.

Tom and Susan both smile: That sound's great, Hayr Soorp. We will discuss it. Hayr Soorp waves goodbye and leaves.

Tom: Susan, good seeing you again. See you soon.

Susan: Yes, see you again next Sunday.

Susan walks to the side and waits a few moments for her mother. Tom starts to walk off. He sees Mrs. Manchian and walks over to her: Mrs. Manchian, I am going home now and drive in your direction. May I give you a ride home?

Mrs. Manchian (looks pleased): Why, yes, thanks very much, Tom.

Tom and Mrs. Manchian walk off.

Mrs. Pezishkian comes back and talks to Susan: I saw you talking to Tom and all those others. Didn't I tell you—isn't it enjoyable to come back to the Armenian Church?

Susan (smiles at her mother): Yes, indeed, mother. Susan hugs her mother and they walk off.

Dean Shahinian is an attorney in Washington, D.C. and a member of the Eastern Diocesan Council.

DEATH & AIDS continued from page 20

lobsters. We were to go to Boston and I was to be his tour guide. Gary was TKA 6/93 always looking ahead. His reports on local television about AIDS and its affect on his life were a great opportunity for him to speak to the general public of this terrible disease, trying to make people understand the horror of it all, but without looking for any pity or sorrow, just understanding. Gary was a class act and his monthly reports became a source of inspiration for others who also suffered and felt only hopelessness. His work for the AIDS Counsel of New York, the Damain center and Unity house, showed a courage and determination that Gary had in making his life, even in his weakened state, one of meaning and purpose. Gary taught me a lot about life, lessons I will never forget, lessons no classroom or textbook could ever offer.

Christmas is a difficult time to lose a loved one, especially being surrounded by all the music and merry-making. But Christmas, the birth of our Saviour, is the beginning for earthly man to see his destiny. That birth of Jesus by the Virgin will lead to the cross of pain and suffering which will lead to his death. His placement in a tomb again marked the beginning, just as he was in his mother's womb awaiting birth, but now awaiting resurrection. All who are born on this earth must one day face death. But for all who believe in Jesus Christ, that dark shadow is overcome by a light which reveals the way to eternal life.

Last year, Gary read at Christmas Eve services. I'll never forget the inner sense of joy that I felt having Gary there. And I remember the joy on his face, the sense of accomplishment when he finished. I know it meant a lot to him because he asked to read again this year.

Loving relationships do not end with the grave. Christmas does not end with a date on a calendar. This year and every year, as you celebrate this holy day, celebrate the gift of life, the lives of loved ones and friends, the life of Gary Kahian and others who have entered into their eternal rest. Greet your loved ones, your friends, a stranger, not with a generic "Happy Holidays", but with

the words, "Merry Christmas". Remember those words contain the innocence of a new born child who is to lead us through life with all of it's joys and sorrows, to that time when we are to enter into the bosom of the earth, but who will also be waiting on the other side of death to welcome us to eternal life. ☩

MEDICINE continued from page 14

ute and consults his computer to find out who deserves one most or who could handle it best."

We must continue always to have faith even in suffering. As it is said, faith can move mountains and I believe he who has faith has everything. Without it even the smallest of tribulation will be gigantic and with it the largest problems will be small. God may not heal our body but he can ease our mind. Our love for Him will give us the strength to carry on.

I wish to conclude with a quote from *Dimensions of Job* by Archibald Macleish. "Man depends on God for all things; God depends on man for one. Without Man's Love, God does not exist as God, only as creator, and love is the one thing, not even God Himself, can command. It is a free gift, or it is nothing. And it is most itself, most free, when it is offered in spite of suffering, of injustice, and of death." We do not love Him because we are afraid of Him, or because He will hurt us if we turn our backs on Him. We love Him because He is God, because He is the author of all the beauty and the order around us – the source of our strength and the hope and courage within us – and by which we are helped in our time of need. We love Him because He is there in our time of need. We love Him because He is the best part of ourselves and of our world. That is what it means to love. Love is not the admiration of perfection, but the acceptance of an imperfect person with all his imperfections, because loving and accepting him make us better and stronger. ☩

FROM THE MAILBOX

I am encouraged by your superb publication. When I read the last issue, I felt a new hope for Christians and Armenians. These were truths that I have all too often kept to myself. I would love to see five million Armenians on their knees for a day, or a week, or a month asking forgiveness, pleading to God for mercy, peace and salvation. That will not happen until the Armenian Church cleanses itself, carries only the torch of Jesus Christ, and does its job of reaching people for Him. In the meantime, no voice of truth should remain silent.

—Paul Atmajian
New Haven, CT

Rev. Fr. Tateos Abdalian, who is a regular contributing columnist was our parish priest for five years. His recent article in *Window* was provocative, enlightening and inspiring. Our parish misses him. However, we shall be able to receive his Christian messages through your publication. Keep up the good work.

— Khachig Chobanian
Greenfield, WI

I applaud your effort. *Window* is a vital and necessary adjunct to our church life. Thank you for this labor of love.

—Rev. Dajad A. Davidian
Watertown, MA

I have been receiving your publication, *Window*, for over a year now, and each time I can hardly wait for the next issue. I wish you could put it out monthly, or every other month instead of quarterly as you do now.

I am a Pastor serving the Armenian Congregational (Evangelical) Church in Chicago. As a past and present editor of a number of Armenian Evangelical official and semi-official magazine and semi-official magazines and publications, I have read and written extensively about the Armenian Apostolic and Evangelical churches and institution. I read your magazine cover to cover the day I receive it, and sometime later, I read it again. Indeed it is a *window* opened to the 21st century. It is wide open to bring in not only some fresh air but also a bright and almost piercing light to penetrate all the dark corners of our church institutions. I write

these lines as a concerned Armenian Christian, and not because I am an Evangelical Pastor. I recognize the fact that the roots of the Armenian Evangelical Church are found in our historic Mother Church (which includes a vast number of nominal apostolic), it is natural for all concerned Armenian Christians to turn their eyes to the Mother Church to take the lead. Therefore, whether we like it or not, any attempt for a diagnostic process should concentrate on the Mother Church. By virtue of her historic role and nationwide influence, she is the only Armenian religious institution that can bring about the much desired religious revival among our people.

As a truly concerned Armenian Christian and a student of Church history, I have often been confronted by a sad dilemma. While, on the one hand, I see the great and immediate need for a reform within the Mother Church (as a first step for a general renewal), on the other hand, I abstain from writing about it for fear of being misunderstood by Apostolic [individuals] and accused of sowing dissension among our people. My denominational affiliation suppresses in me the desire of expressing my views and participating in the ongoing discussion about church reform. My position as an Evangelical Minister will make it even worse. I hate to see the secular media taking advantage of our denominational infighting which will bring dishonor to the name of our Lord Jesus.

Believe me! I envied the contributors of *Window's* most recent issue which had most compliantly featured the problem of hypocrisy among the religious and within the institutionalized church. Father Kelegian was superb in his spiritual diagnosis. The other articles were also most admirable and displayed much courage and sincerity. I can wholeheartedly subscribe to each and every one of those articles. In saying this, I also have in mind Evangelical churches and Pastors, including myself, who often fall victim to this mortal sin, Hypocrisy. After I read all the articles more than once, I said to myself that if there were such openness and spiritual concern around the Armenian clergy in the early part

of the 19th century, there would have been no need for a reform movement and the subsequent emergence of the Evangelical Church.

I consider the Armenian Evangelical Church to be not an end in itself, but "a voice in the wilderness," crying out for a reformation in the Mother Church. Once this happens, the Evangelical Church will cease to exist having no other *raison d'être*. Unlike the Armenian Catholic Church, our church and community recognize the Armenian Apostolic Church as the Mother Church of all Armenians. As such, and historically, we consider ourselves as an offshoot of the Mother Church. I do not believe in denominationalism, or in proselytism. Whatever we do in the Diaspora and Armenia is motivated by our faithfulness to the Lord's Great Commission, "Go... preach... teach... baptize..." Matt. 28:16-20. Our aim and desire for the Mother Church is not to turn it into a Protestant or Evangelical church, but to see it become a spiritual power-house to strengthen and to enlighten our nation spiritually for the glory of God and for the wellbeing of our people.

My present wish for you is that you continue your courageous work at the ACRAG through *Window* unhampered. May the forum that you have created be open to Armenian Evangelicals as well so that a constructive dialogue is launched for the spiritual advancement of both churches within the same national family.

Rev. C. Darakjian
Chicago, IL

Comments? Opinions?

Write:

Letters to the Editor
Window Quarterly
P.O. Box 700664
San Jose, CA 95170
USA

or e-mail
acrag@sain.org

To the Editors

The American Passion for Cults

"For the building of this holy place and its reform (barekargut'ean) let us beseech the Lord."

Heresy is bad theology. It is not necessarily bad religion, but like all wrong thinking it may lead to bad religion.

Religion and theology are not identical. Religion is our belief in God and our effort to live by that belief. Theology is the effort to give a rational explanation to our belief: it is *thinking about religion*. Heresy is a mistake in that thinking. It is therefore bad theology. This is how I will sum up the impression I received reading the articles in your latest issue of Window (vol. III, no. 2). This was particularly so in the pieces written by Elise Antreassian and Louise Kalemkerian who seem to have the American passion for cults.

A striking feature of the public debate about the future of the Armenian Church has been its one-sidedness. The rhetoric of dissidents is generally strident, pugnacious and partisan. Occasionally it is dishonorable. For dissidents to aver that they are being thrown out of the Church is simply nonsense. For one reason or another they have decided that they can no longer hold to the doctrinal core of the Church of Armenia. That is their choice and their responsibility. I personally find it deeply distressing but let the record of its causes, at least, be straight. For a substantial and influential section of the Armenian nation the Armenian Orthodox Apostolic Church is the nation's conscious, the bearer of its spiritual culture, bearing witness in its ancient Churches, the Bible, in the spirituality of Geiger Narekac'i and Nersess Shnorhali, Khrimian Hayrik and Komitas Vardapet, and to a spirit which lies at the heart of Armenianness.

How does the Church maintain its ancient teaching on faith and morals in a culture increasingly indifferent to the one and disobedient to the other? The ordination of women to the priesthood in the Anglican communion was taken under pressure from secular feminism in alliance with the theological liberalism dominant in the ranks of the senior clergy. In discussing whether women should be ordained to the priesthood or not it will be well for the sake of clarity to make some preliminary points.

First, it must be recognized that two quite distinct questions are involved, though once their common

existence and their mutual distinctness have been accepted it will for the most part be possible to discuss them together. The former is whether it is possible for women to be priests. The latter is whether it is right and desirable for them to be priests. Unless the former is answered in the affirmative the second cannot arise. This is important because it is frequently assumed without argument that a woman upon whom the traditional rites of ordination to the priesthood have been performed by a bishop will undoubtedly have become a priest so that the only questions remaining to be discussed are ethical ones (Is it not unjust to withhold the priesthood from woman?) and pastoral ones (Will not women perform the traditional duties and functions of the priesthood just as efficiently as men?).

Secondly—and this is closely connected with the first point—it must be stressed that what we Armenians are concerned with is the Catholic priesthood common to the great Episcopal communions of East and West and not with the various forms of ministry that exist in the Protestant churches and communities. In saying this I am not adopting an attitude of contempt or unfriendliness to our separated brethren but simply recognizing the fact that the Catholic conception of the ministry is different from the Protestant conception even if the Catholic conception includes the Protestant conception as an element in itself.

The questions to which I address myself are as follows:

1. What is the significance of Christ's maleness for his Eternal High Priesthood?

2. What is the significance of a Christian priest's maleness for his participation in Christ's Priesthood?

Divine Sonship does not in itself give us a proof of the necessary maleness of the priesthood of the incarnate Word. That can only be done considering the major sexual image in the New Testament of Christ's redemptive work—the image of Christ as Bridegroom of the Church. The sexual nuptial and sacrificial priestly images are interdependent and inseparable that Christ's sacrificial death could be such only if it was the death of a God-man, one of the male gender who could be said to be Bridegroom.

Those in favor of women's ordination should consider the following declarations made in the Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church:

- Remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is seated on the throne not made with hands (*Prothesis-arajadrut' iwn*).
- O Lord our God who didst send

our Lord Jesus Christ, the heavenly bread, the food of the whole world, to be savior and redeemer and benefactor.

- For thou thyself offerest and art offered and receives and divest, O Christ our God (Prayer of Entrance).

- And at the end of these days, tearing up the sentence of condemnation for all our debts, thou didst give us thine only begotten Son both debtor and debt, immolation and anointed, lamb and bread of heaven, high priest and sacrifice for he is distributor and he himself is distributed always in our midst without being ever consumed. (The Remembrance).

- And thine of thine own unto thee we offer from all and for all.

- O Lord our God, thou didst called us Christians after the name of thine only begotten Son.

- O thou who fittest with the Father and art here sacrificed.

The objections to the ordination of women are not those of blind prejudice, male chauvinism, or even of expediency and psychology, but of theology. Women's ordination is, then, not only undesirable, it is impossible. There is a defect of matter. Woman 'ordained' bishop or priest are not bishops or priest. Their orders are not orders. Their sacraments are not sacraments. The 'ordained' women are simply muddled, apostate laywomen, who have turned their backs on their true Christian vocation. The Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church is still the only upholder of true, Armenian Christianity. It is still the one, true, Armenian manifestation of the universal church. I do not want to be told what others think of us—or how they view us—I want to hear about our strength, our achievement, our spiritual culture.

The recent joint encyclicals issued by our church leaders were priceless documents. The central purpose of the letter should have been to demonstrate once and for all the strength of the Armenian Church tradition and the mythical nature of the adversaries' claims. They should have consulted the Encyclicals of Patriarch Maghakia Ormanian (1899) or Catholics Makertich (1889). The questions to be asked should have been Does the Armenian Church retain a unique historic purpose? If so, wherein lies the authority that will sustain it? The Church is not a debating society, a salvation army soup kitchen, nor a catering establishment.

On Easter Sunday (1993) I preached to my congregation on the need to make our lives a real searching for God, a real giving of our lives to God. The journey through life should take the appearance, not of a pilgrimage which follows remotely the footsteps of a hero who first trod the way

long ago, but of a journey like that of the disciples to Emmaus, accompanied by Christ. They were to ask: "Was not our heart burning within us whilst he spoke on the way...."

To share a journey with a friend is to halve its length and its hardships. With this companionship we need not fear the aspirates of the road. The disciples at Emmaus recognized the Lord when he "took bread, and blessed, and brake and gave to them". The breaking of the bread is the symbol of hospitality of friendship. The cult of individual secularization, and the loss of community have turned religion into something people take up as a private hobby. I would urge our members to safeguard the habits and values of their Church as a source of stability and familiarity in a dangerous and confusing world.

But religion is also about creative new life, change and adventure. The problem is to hold these things in relation when everything seems to be changing so fast. The Armenian Church is not against change. The corpus of sacred poetry introduced into the Church's worship by Nersess Shnorhali in the twelfth century reveals a deep and touching spiritual devotion expressed not in classical Armenian but in middle Armenian. The exposition of the Prayers of the liturgy and the *Commentary of the Divine Offices* by Nersess Lambronatsi, an eminent figure of the twelfth century, was also an effort to make sure that we members of the Armenian Church were holding to the unchanging essence of our faith amidst changes in the formulation of Christianity. The outstanding pioneer work in recovering and recording the treasury of ancient Armenian sacred music by Komitas Vardapet (1869-1935) in a new system of notation and the introduction of the organ and the harmonization of the Holy Liturgy for male and female voices was also achieved through desires for change. The religious works of Khrimian Hayrik is nothing else but the continuation of the work begun by Nersess Shnorhali—a thorough going exposition of the Christian doctrine positively expounded as confessed and taught in the Armenian Church (*Draxti Entanik*= Family in Paradise). There is no reason why the sacred poetry of the late Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem Eghishe Duriant (1860-1930) should not be incorporated into the Armenian Hymnal. The same can be said of the hundreds of old and new uncanonical hymns edited and published by Sahak Vardapet Amatouni in Vagharshapat in 1911.

Rather than bailing out in haste and peddling exhibitionist wishes and impulses I would recommend all the contributors and readers of *Window*

Women and the Priesthood

"THIS IS MY BODY, THIS IS MY BLOOD"

A Roman Catholic Priest's View

Even a quick glance around a Catholic congregation on Sunday shows one reason why Jesus chose men as apostles: it was the only way he could get at least some of them into church! Yet clerical privilege, power and prestige no longer attract men to the priesthood in great numbers, Thank God. The one thing worse than shortage of priests would be men who become priests for the wrong reasons.

Jesus expected his apostles to serve, not rule. The Bible quotes Jesus as clearly instructing the ordination class of 33 A.D. not to lord it over others. He called 12 men to follow his example and give up the traditional male role of dominance. He commanded his chosen ones to assume the role expected of women: service.

Twenty centuries later, only men wield power in church while women still serve. Yet service, not power, characterizes a priest of Christ, and women have proven themselves worthy and willing to be called holy orders. Rome has rejected the idea and many Catholics consider women priests unbiblical and untraditional. But if priests are called to communicate Christ to the community, the blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of all priests, is also a role model.

She did what the priests do: submit to God's will, receive the Holy Spirit, glorify God in prayer, treasure the Word, give it flesh, direct people to full Christ and share his sacrifice on the cross. She of all people can point to Jesus and say, "This is my body. This is my blood."

If a woman was worthy to produce the body of Christ physically, why are women unworthy to produce the Body of Christ sacramentally? The argument "But it has never been done before" applies also to the virgin birth and the resurrection. Since self-sacrifice, not power, is at the heart of the Eucharist, who is better qualified to represent Jesus' sacrificial love than the one who offers faithful service?

— By Fr. Joseph R. Veneroso, M.M.
Editorial in *MaryKnoll*, May 1993

to study Errand Vardapet Ter Minasian's *Havots ekeghetsou veranorogut'ean khndir'e'* (The problem of the reform of the Armenian Church) published in Tiflis back in 1910. The lessons of history encourage us not to fear such changes so long as in escaping the dominance of the past we take equal care to escape the dominance of the contemporary and retain an eye for those kinds of Christian imagery which, though old, have a timeless power to reach over the passage of centuries. Amidst changes in the formulation of Christianity I want members of the Armenian Church to be sure that we are holding to the unchanging essence of our faith. It is in this spirit that I interpret and understand the dictum of the Armenian Church father Stepanos Siunetsi who said, "Our faith is not depleted to be renewed and is not deficient to be replaced." How can we be sure of this? What is the differ-

ence between Christianity and some substitute for it? The test is whether we hold firmly to the Passion and Resurrection of the Savior. Keep in mind the Cross and you will know the horridness of your sins and your need for forgiveness, and you will never substitute a facile humanism for the Gospel. Keep in mind the Resurrection and you will know that the goal is heaven and will never slip into secularized religion. I expect you have ambitions. Most people have ambition stand there are ambitions which are right to have. But there is one ambition which Christ requires of us if we bear his name: the ambition of being near to him John 12: 24, 26) "Save thy people and bless thine inheritance. Guard the fullness of thy Church.

—Rev. Dr. Nerses Nersessian
Vicar of St. Peters Armenian Church
London

Past Windows you may have missed...

Window Vol. I, No. 1 **PREMIER ISSUE**

The first issue of Window is an eight-page introduction that sets the tone and scope of this "new" publication. It consists of three articles written by the editors and a translation of Patriarch Torkom Kushagian's "Revival in the Armenian Church."

Window Vol. I, No. 2 **"ARMENIAN THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION"**

This issue provides a series of articles in search of an Armenian theology of Liberation, stimulating discussion and dialogue between Armenian church members and theologians. The issue provides a descriptive and interpretive study of the subject and underlines its application in the Armenian Church.

Window Vol. I, No. 3 **"1915—THE YEAR THE CHURCH DIED"**

This entire issue is dedicated to the martyred clergy of the Armenian Church during the Genocide of 1915. With this issue, *Window* turns the views of its readers back 75 years and provides a glimpse of the pre-Genocide Armenian Church. For the first time in the English language, the monumental work of Teotig—a scribe who tediously recorded the lives of the martyrdom of the Armenian clergy—is presented with statistical and analytical charts. Addressed in this issue are the issue of remembrance, the problem of canonization of the victims and the silence of Church leadership concerning religious treasures.

Window Vol. I, No. 4 **"IS THE COLLAR CHOKING THE PRIEST?"**

This issue discusses the role for the Armenian priest from the perspective of both the Armenian community and the Church. In doing so, it dispels some of the stereotypes and myths associated with the Armenian clergy. Issues such as reform, recruitment, and contemporary challenges to the church are discussed in a very sincere and open forum.

Window Vol. II, No. 1 **"CULTS IN ARMENIA"**

In an attempt to educate the Armenian community on the dangers of cults, this issue provides an extensive coverage of cults presently operating in Armenia. The deep psychological wounds caused by the 1988 earthquake have facilitated the infiltration of various cults into Armenia under false pretenses. This issue of *Window* poses a challenge to the Armenian community and the Church, by the fact that "the cults will do what we neglect! They will extend where we cannot reach! They will be heard where our voice is silent."

Window Vol. II, No. 2 **"INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF ARMENIAN CLERGY"**

The first ever International Conference of Armenian Clergy held in New York, June 17-21, 1991 is covered with exclusive interviews and analysis by the *Window* editors. An inside view of the conference is provided. Detailed information about the current situation in Armenia by the directors and leaders of the Center for the Propagation of Faith. Candid and alarming revelations regarding the religious awakening in Armenia and the Church's ability (or inability) to provide for the needs of the people. Must reading for anyone concerned with the current and future state of the Armenian Church in Armenia and the diaspora.

Window Vol. II, No. 3 **"ARE ALL BRANDS THE SAME?"**

This issue of *Window* explores the Armenian Protestant and Roman Catholics churches, providing a history of their development and place within the Armenian Community. A candid discussion of possible means of reapprochement is provided. Also, the place of the Armenian Church within the world Church community is explored with statements by the Orthodox Churches and reflections concerning the cost of unity. This issue is filled with facts and information. A map of religions is provided as a centerpiece to this important volume.

Window Vol. II, No. 4 **"TESTING THE MYTH AND BEYOND"**

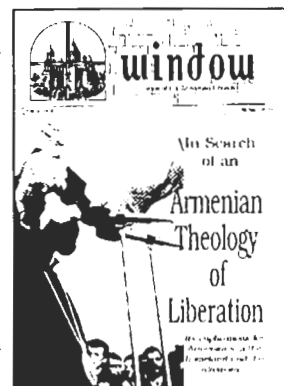
The understanding of myths and their place in religious perception is the theme of this issue, especially as it is applied in the Armenian Church and community. The main article gives an excellent definition and explanation of what Myth is. Of particular interest is a discussion of Vahè Oshagan and the controversy surrounding a piece of his writing, entitled *Odzoom*. Also, two articles discuss services in the liturgical tradition of the Armenian Church, namely Blessing of Madagh and Chrismation.

Window Vol. III, No. 1 **"THE CHURCH IN ARMENIA"**

This issue presents a series of interviews conducted in Armenia, which give a general view of the state of the church and religion in the post-soviet Republic of Armenia. There are conversations with the Catholicos, representatives of Armenian political parties; Armenian "skinheads," and others who are closely involved with the church. The guest editorial in this issues is written by Bishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Armenian Church of Canada.

Window Vol. III, No. 2 **"HYPOCRISY"**

Hypocrisy is among those topics that are normally avoided in church life. However, in this issue, ordained and lay workers in the church candidly write about their experiences in the Armenian Church and share their thoughts about hypocrisy in the community. While the contributors discuss various aspects of church life, they provide practical suggestions and programs that could tackle some of the burning issues in the Armenian Church.



Announcing!

WINDOW ON THE INTERNET

The Armenian Church Research and Analysis Group (ACRAG) is pleased to announce its accessibility on the internet. ACRAG can be reached internationally via email at: acrag@sain.org

*ACRAG has joined forces with S*A*I*N* to make Window available through the SAIN archive server. Anyone with internet access can now download past and current issues of Window with a simple command. Internet access is available world wide through government agencies, private businesses, universities and subscription services such as CompuServe, America on Line, GENie, and Delphi. With a population of over 12 million people and growing at a rate of 10% per month, the internet provides a means for information dissemination. ACRAG is proud to be a part of this growing community.*

Send letters to the editors, subscription requests, back issue requests or a note requesting details for downloading Window to:
acrag@sain.org



SAIN is the St. Andrew Information Network, 408-257-1840 (24hrs/day); CompuServe, America on Line, GENie and Delphi are trademarks and registered trademarks of their respective owners.

Window Quarterly
ACRAG
P.O. Box 700664
San Jose, CA 95170
USA